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FAMILIAR INSTRUCTIONS

AND

EVENING LECTURES.

FAMILIAR INSTRUCTIONS

AND

EVENING LECTURES

ON

ALL THE TRUTHS OF RELIGION.

BY

MONSEIGNEUR DE SÈGUR.

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PREFACE.

THESE Familiar Instructions, almost two hundred in number, form, if I mistake not, a complete course of Christian doctrine, and a collection of very simple, elementary lectures, well adapted to the religious need of our time.

I offer them to Christian families, in which the good custom prevails of always joining in religious reading after evening prayers; to schoolmasters and mistresses, who desire to teach children something beyond reading and writing; to catechists and to priests, who are anxious for solid reading of a short and practical kind, which would be useful to them at religious meetings.

They are the result of fifteen years of popular preaching, and I believe I have had sufficient experience of the spiritual need of the people of our time and of our country, to feel convinced that they will bring to many, with the blessing of God, the first-fruits of salvation.

Let none be offended by the simplicity of method and style; I believe this quite necessary in an age when the folly of newspapers, novels, and a thousand unhealthy publications, causes the very elements of faith and good sense to be often utterly forgotten.

I trust that the Blessed Virgin, who is the Mother of the poor and the insignificant, will deign to make my poor and insignificant words productive of much good, and to bless all my readers, who will be, perhaps, themselves both insignificant and poor! They are those whom God loves the best, and it is for this reason that I dedicate to them this simple collection.

July 2nd, 186[illegible],
Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady.

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FAMILIAR INSTRUCTIONS.

TRUE KNOWLEDGE.

THERE are people who know many things, and yet are strangers to the only *necessary* knowledge; there are others who know little, and are looked upon as ignorant, whilst in reality they possess this one true knowledge.

The first are men, too numerous, alas! who do not wish to acquaint themselves with that knowledge which leads to eternal salvation—the knowledge of religion; they know much of which they might safely be ignorant, and are ignorant of that which every man in this world must know, or risk the loss of his own soul.

The second are true Christians, who place before all things God and their salvation; *these* have that true knowledge for which nothing will suffice, and which is beyond all.

Our first duty is to know God, and to be well instructed in religion.

Why do so many fail in this?

I. Because they say, people must be educated, and have numerous books, to be able to study religion. It is all very well for the priest who knows Latin, and for the rich, who have received education, but with the poor it is very different, and the study of religion was never intended for them. Those who speak thus do not understand what religion is. God gives it principally to the poor and insignificant who are His most privileged children. In order to know Him, to love Him, and to *serve Him, it* is not necessary to be learned,

nor to know Greek and Latin, it is not even necessary to know how to read. It is sufficient to listen with a willing mind, and in an honest and sincere spirit, to the teaching of the Church brought to us by her pastors.

The priests are charged by the Bishops, the shepherds of the Catholic Church and the ministers of Jesus Christ, —to teach all Christians, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, what they must believe, and what they must do to serve God and to gain heaven. Being themselves directed and led by the Pope—the Vicar of Jesus Christ and the infallible pastor of all the faithful—they teach both priests and people. Therefore, the way to learn true faith, and true Christian morality, is to listen with docility to the words of the Catholic priest. When people are educated, when they know Latin, and can study ponderous books, they can certainly learn many things of which they would otherwise be ignorant; but this knowledge is not *necessary*, and though it may often prove very useful, it is easy to be an excellent Christian and a very good servant of God without possessing it.

II. "Well," they add, "even supposing that I could learn religion without books, I must have time in which to go and listen to the priest, and I have many other things to do; I must work to gain bread for myself and my family."

Nothing can be more praiseworthy than the laborious life of an honest workman, but is it truly work which prevents you from hearing Mass on Sunday, and from listening to religious instructions? Is it not rather indifference? Why should you not be able to do what so many others do, who are forced like yourself to gain their living by continual work. If you gave to the Church and to the Word of God the long hours that you spend perhaps unscrupulously at the public-house, you would have time to become very learned on the subject of religion. Know this for certain, in such things people can, as a rule, do just what they desire to do.

People serve God when they have an earnest unwavering desire to serve Him; then they find time enough, and more than enough, not only to go to Mass on Sunday, and to hear the instructions of the priest, but even to read good books and to study the very foundations of the great *science* of salvation.

III. "*Ah,* that may be true," they argue afresh, "I

can if I wish learn all about religion, but I have very little wish to do so, because it is tedious. Religion teaches me things which would be troublesome to me, and I rather prefer not to know them."

This reasoning, which is not always expressed thus plainly, but goes on within the mind, is not worthy of a reasonable man. All is not ended because you have turned away your head, and closed your ears, to the teaching of God.

This is to imitate those birds of the desert who hide their heads in the sand when they are closely pursued, and who imagine they are safe because they no longer see their peril. My poor friend, you will be overtaken by One whose power nothing can escape; if in this world you elude the pursuit of His love, in eternity you will fall most certainly beneath the stroke of His justice. Would it not be better to go to Him with a willing heart, and to merit by your faithfulness an eternal reward?

If ever the service of God weigh heavily upon you, remember heaven and hell, revealed to us by faith in so positive a manner. Remember heaven, which at all hazards you must gain; remember hell, from which you must escape. Which is better? To restrain your inclinations, and to be happy for ever, or to follow your own devices, and be endlessly and hopelessly miserable.

And next, is it true that religion is hard? If it impose some sacrifices, does it not offer in exchange many consolations; strength and joy, peace and happiness, a thousand times preferable to that which gratified passion and caprice can give. No one is so happy as the true Christian, or rather he alone knows what real happiness is. Dismiss, then, from your mind all objections and unmeaning arguments; be honest and single-hearted; do not seek to deceive yourself; it is impossible to deceive God—the Judge of all! Desire goodness, learn religion, love and practise it; its yoke is easy, and the burden it imposes is light.

ON THE NATURE OF RELIGION.

THERE are many people in the world who never wish to hear religion mentioned; the very name of it excites their anger; they speak of it with a hatred, a scorn, and a contempt that are truly extraordinary! Have they a knowledge of it? Have they studied it? Have they discovered in it something that others have not perceived? No. They are, as a rule, men of very superficial education, who have forgotten, many years since, the little Christianity that was taught them in their childhood, in whom age has developed their evil passions, and who have become more and more the enemies of religion, as they have more and more indulged in sinful habits, in bad companionships and associations.

What is there in religion that can thus excite their hatred? For my part (and I have well investigated it), I can discover nothing that is not good, great, beautiful, and consoling; nothing that is not worthy of God, worthy of an upright, reasonable man.

But what *is* religion?

It is the knowledge, the love, and the service of God. It is the sacred bond by which we are united to our Creator and our Father. It is the great science which teaches to all, to the rich as well as to the poor, to children, and to men both young and old, to the learned and to the ignorant, what they are, whence they came, whither they are going, what the destiny that awaits them when this life is ended; the course they must pursue to be good and happy, the evil they must avoid if they would escape misery and punishment. It is but the science and the practice of duty. What is there in this deserving of condemnation and invective?

Religion is designed for nothing but good; she cares for, comforts, and even prevents, as far as is possible, all human misery. She is the protectress of infancy. It is she who, *in her holy* compassion for the weakness of childhood, has

everywhere erected asylums for forsaken children, for sick children, for convalescent children, for orphans; it is she who has endowed homes for apprentices and workmen. It is she who has founded refuges, hospitals, and has raised up innumerable religious communities, and inspired men and women to care for the unfortunate, the sick, and the prisoners, and for those infected by disease; to receive weary, wandering travellers, and to help erring women to turn from sin.

It is religion which has civilised modern society. From what did all our grand ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity, and love for the poor originally spring, if not from the Christian religion, which the ungrateful reject and blaspheme?

"What would become of the world without religion?" said Napoleon, on the rock of St. Helena; "the greatest service that I have rendered to France has been to re-establish the Catholic religion."

Where shall we find that craving for equality, which is the torment of modern society, fully and legitimately satisfied, if not in religion? Behold, in our churches, side by side, the rich and the poor, master and servant, the faithful Christian and the repentant sinner; beneath the pulpit, at the font, in the confessional, at the altar, there is one rule for all. Is not this a true equality, free from all dissension? By its power everything is elevated and ennobled, nothing is debased or overthrown.

Religion is the friend of man; it guards him and blesses him in childhood, in age, and in death. . . It delivers him holy and rejoicing into the bosom of his God, who has rendered him good, holy, and happy during his earthly probation; and who will reward him for his fidelity throughout eternity.

Let us then love and reverence this holy Christian faith; let us both learn and practise what it teaches. The more we know of religion the better we shall love it; the more we love it, the better we shall practise it.

Vice, evil passions, pride, and ignorance, are the only enemies of religion. When we are acting rightly we are drawn towards it, as soon as we desire to do evil we begin to turn from it.

It is consequently good, because evil alone is at enmity with it. It is *good*, because all who practise it sincerely

become good and holy from its influence. It is good because its effects are ever salutary and beneficial.

Religious ignorance and indifference is the bane of the present century, one of the deepest wounds of modern society, but a wound which is, thank God, healing day by day.

DEATH.

Is death the end of all things?

There are men who will not hesitate to answer this question with an unblushing affirmative. To their minds the only difference between themselves, their dog, and their cat, consists, in colour, skin, and the manner of walking.

Now much as we admire humility, we must confess that we have certainly more pride than such persons as these, since we assert that there exists between animals and men a far more fundamental difference.

Then, in what does this difference lie?

In the fact that man has a soul, endowed with power to reflect, to desire, to love, and to act freely; a soul created by God in His own image, and which is, for this reason, *immortal.*

A *spirit* is a being that we cannot see with our eyes, nor hear with our ears, nor touch with our hands: a being, in one word, which cannot be apprehended by the material senses of the body, but can only be known to us by the aid of our reason.

Our *soul* is a being such as this, it is a pure spirit united to our body which is material. The body is that coarse and material part of ourselves which must die, but the soul, the spiritual and essential part, is not subject to death. At the very moment that it quits the body, just as one casts aside a garment, the soul appears before God; if it has been holy and faithful, and has loved and served God, it will then receive His blessing, and will be ultimately admitted into eternal bliss: if, on the contrary, it has been sinful and unfaithful, and has neglected the service of God, and those duties which it was bound to fulfil, it is cursed and condemned for ever, and is eternally punished in hell.

Of all God's creatures none but men and angels have been endowed with an immortal spirit.

An angel is a pure spirit, not united to a body. Man is a soul clothed with a body—a spirit united to a body. An animal is a body without a reasonable, free, immortal soul.

Therefore to say, "When I am dead, *all* will be dead," is not only to assert what is false, but it is to say, moreover, "I am nothing but an animal void of understanding, like my horse or my dog. I am even inferior to many animals, for my dog sees farther, runs more swiftly, and has fewer necessities than I; my cat can see in the dark, can climb where I could not, has no need of many things that are the common requirements of life to me; my canary is free from grief, from care, from anxiety; it is always contented, always singing—I am therefore the least enviable—the most pitiable of animals."

Speak thus if it gives you pleasure, believe it if you can, but for ourselves, as our very least pretension, we claim that we are *men*.

Materialists, who declare that there is no God and no soul, reason falsely, and make an unfounded and incredible assertion which no man ever has been, or ever will be, able to prove. They lie to their own conscience, and feel an inward conviction that it is not as they say. This is so true that at the awful moment of death, when all delusions vanish, and when man is placed between that life which is fast slipping from his grasp, and that eternity into which he is so soon to be engulfed, he sees for the first time clearly that *truth* by which he must be judged. *Then* all things appear to him in a different light; *then* he will invariably cry for mercy, ask pardon of God, call in the priest, confess his sins, and entreat those who surround him not to live as he has lived or follow his example.

This is because men are not guided by reason, but by passion or prejudice, when they blaspheme religion, and deny the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. Evil influences working within bring confusion to the mind, making them argue falsely as though possessed by a species of frenzy. Let us then live as reasonable beings destined for an immortal life, in which we shall see God, and possess Him unto all eternity. Let us prepare ourselves for our great destiny by a pure, holy,

Christian life. Let us learn to sacrifice pleasure to duty, to fulfil all righteousness, and to be ever prepared to appear before God. Thus alone can we be good and happy on earth, *perfect* and happy in our everlasting home.

THE SOUL AND THE BODY.

We all have a body composed of flesh and bones, and judging only by outward appearances, we are but animals of a higher order than dogs and cats. Animals have indeed a body of which the organism is almost similar to ours, eyes which see like our eyes, ears which hear all that we hear, in one word, organs by means of which their bodies live and act precisely as our own. Are we then animals? Alas! if we only judged by appearances and the lives of many, we should be tempted to answer, Yes!

In truth, what difference is there between a beast and the man who thinks, lives, loves like a beast, caring only for eating, and drinking, and sleeping?

With you, dear reader, I know it is not thus, and you have doubtless often reflected on that other part of yourself which we call the soul, and which makes the distinction between the man and the brute. When you think, it is your soul which thinks within you, when you desire anything, it is your soul that desires it. The soul is a spirit created in the image of God, and therefore able to recognise the truth, to love the right, and to act freely. Your soul is of a far more perfect nature than your body. It is to your soul that God communicates Himself, when He comes to you, enlightening you with the twofold light of reason and of faith, and filling your heart with His grace in order to gain your love. It is not your body, but your soul, which is good or wicked, accordingly as it inclines towards good or evil, accordingly as it separates itself from Jesus Christ by sin, or unites itself to Him by obedience and love. Your body alone is not capable of being either good or wicked. Yet these two, body and soul, are closely united, united in such a manner that we are *men* only by reason of this union. What is our life indeed but the union of our body and our soul? My soul is the living and invisible inmate of this visible dwelling-place which I call my body; it is my soul which ani-

mates my body; which thinks through my brain, which loves through my heart, which hears, sees, speaks, acts, and suffers through my organs and my senses.

But the soul has a life which springs from its free and voluntary union with *God*, and all the strength it possesses to do good comes from this Divine source. It can die, that is to say, it can separate itself from God by sin; and then it imitates the devil, and takes part in his rebellion, and if it *persevere* in this rebellion, at the very moment that it leaves this world it will be eternally condemned and cast into hell.

Religion, then, teaches us to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him, teaches us also how our soul may have *life;* it teaches us to be truly *men*, and to prepare ourselves in this world to live with the holy angels an eternal and beatific life in heaven.

Religion is also the most important and necessary of all sciences; it is our guide in the journey of life; and the man who refuses to listen to its voice, and rejects its guidance, is under a fatal delusion. Such reflections are more necessary now than in past ages. How many men there are who seem ignorant even of the existence of their soul! And how many *live* as though they were thus ignorant! Their only anxiety is to gain money to minister to their bodily wants and appetites; when they have eaten, drank, and slept well, when they have comfortable houses, good clothes, and assured employment, they seem to think that they have perfectly accomplished their destiny; and their soul, and eternity, and God, are utterly forgotten.

Are you created in the image of God? Are you Christian men?

Do not imitate the folly of the men of whom I speak. Listen to the voice of religion which brings to you true life, and peace, and happiness in this world. By the aid of religion we may bear with patience those earthly troubles which are both the trial of our fidelity and the expiation of our sins. There would be no real misery on earth if every man studied the life of his soul as carefully as he studies the life of his body. The world would become a terrestrial paradise, and the greater part of the evils which afflict us would rapidly disappear.

RELIGION.

God has placed us in this world to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him, and, by this means, to attain to the eternal happiness of heaven.

This is our *last end*, that is to say, the *object* for which we were created.

God, when designing us for this excellent end, gave to us all one method of attaining it. This method is Religion; for religion is that Revelation which our Heavenly Father has deigned to make of all that we must perform, practise, and avoid, if we desire to do His will on earth, and to merit by our fidelity an eternal happiness in heaven.

There is only one true religion. Only one which transmits to us, unaltered, the Divine revelations: this is the *Christian or Catholic religion.*

We must therefore believe all it teaches, and practise all it commands, if we would not rebel against God Himself. Other religions which have prevailed and do still prevail upon earth (Idolatry, Mahometanism, Judaism, Protestantism, &c.), are sacrilegious and lying imitations of the true religion, just as false coinage is a guilty and lying imitation of the real. The Catholic religion alone can furnish solemn evidences of its truth. It is called *Christian* from the name of Jesus Christ its Divine founder; we call it also *Catholic* which means *Universal*, because Jesus Christ delivered it to all men and for all ages. It commenced with the creation of the world, and will endure as long as the world endures, and unto all eternity.

On earth God has caused it to pass through three developments, which may be likened to three successive ages. Religion resembles man who passes through the three ages of infancy, youth, and maturity, being throughout these changes still one and the same individual; it is also like God who is one, though there are in His Divine unity three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. In the same way the true religion is one, although it has developed itself by three distinct and successive revelations.

The first revelation, the first teaching that God gave to the world, was given to Adam and to the Patriarchs

(Noe, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, &c.), and endured until Moses: we call it the *patriarchal religion;* and it lasted for about 2500 years. The second revelation was the development of the first, and was made by the Lord to Moses and to the other prophets (David, Solomon, Isaias, Jeremias, Daniel, Ezechiel, &c.), it endured until the coming of the Saviour of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, about 1500 years: we call it the *Jewish religion.*

The third and last revelation given by God, which is the *Catholic or Christian religion,* developed and completed the two former; it was made by the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ, who appeared in the world 1877 years ago, whose reign shall have no end.

Jesus Christ, God made man, is the Head of all religion. Just as the sun at noontide irradiates all space, that which he has already traversed, that which he occupies, and that which he has to traverse still, vivifying all things by his beneficent light, so Jesus Christ, the eternal King of souls, Redeemer and Saviour of the world, irradiates with His Divine influence the past, the present, and the future.

He it is who was regarded from afar by the holy patriarchs, the prophets, and the faithful of former times; it is *He* whom they have looked for; it is *He* whom they have loved; it is in *Him* they have believed and hoped, and by whom they have been saved.—It is *He* whom the Apostles and the elect of His own time believed, adored, and loved. It is on *Him* that the eyes of all future generations must be fixed, even to the end of the ages, when they shall all be judged by Him.

This Divine Master, after having given to men the third revelation, after having taught them all that it is good for them to know in this life concerning religion, urged His love to the extreme limits of a death upon the cross to expiate our sins, and satisfy the justice of His Father; He has purified us by His blood, and has opened to us the gate of heaven which sin had closed against us. Risen, glorious, and triumphant, He ascended to His Father; and there He awaits in eternal glory all His true disciples, even those who believe in His word, who imitate His example, and who employ those means of salvation which He instituted before He left the earth.

Further, we shall see how, to preserve His holy religion pure and intact and to spread it throughout the whole earth,

Jesus Christ instituted a *Church*, namely, a body of pastors, spiritual leaders of men, guardians of His doctrine, trustees of His authority. We shall see that the Supreme Head of these pastors, and consequently of all the disciples of Jesus Christ, is the Pope, Bishop of Rome, successor of the Apostle St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles; and that thus the Christian religion is that which is taught by the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

This Divine religion will endure as long as the world endures, without any change in its doctrine, beyond the fear of any alteration through the creeping in of error. It is the work of God; He who made it watches over it: Jesus Christ protects it by His Almighty power. After the final judgment the Christian religion will not end. In heaven it shall attain to an absolute perfection, and shall endure throughout all ages. All its members shall be saints, worthy of Jesus Christ their Divine Head, who shall admit them to a participation in His transcendent glory and Divine beatitude. And thus, humanity, which came out from God, and has been separated from Him by sin, shall be, through the Christian religion, reconciled to God, and shall have its home in Him for all eternity.

The Christian religion is the true light, and the true happiness of man in this world and the next. It contains all that is grand, simple, good, and worthy of God and man. Happy he who knows this holy religion; but far happier he who practises it, and makes it the rule of his life; he accomplishes the will of God; he walks in the narrow way, he knows his Creator, serves, and loves Him, and after the trials of this life shall reap a glorious reward! . . .

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

There are many people, otherwise good and upright, who live without religion, and resemble pagans in the midst of Christian society; this is because they have no real knowledge of religion. Having no knowledge of it, or only a very superficial knowledge, they do not appreciate *it; having no* appreciation of it, they cannot love it;

having no love for it, they do not dream of practising it. There is often a very false idea of religion in the world, and it is in accordance with this that it is judged, condemned, and criticised. This is a deplorably thoughtless age, and it is with the intention that you may avoid this common failing, that I desire to explain to you briefly this holy and glorious Christian faith.

Religion is that bond by which God is united to His creature, and the creature to his God. Religion is that sacred and necessary science which teaches us what God is, what He has done for us; what we are, what we must do for God; what life is, and what awaits us when life is ended.

There is one true religion, because there is one true God.

There is only one, because there is only one true God; and to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him, constitutes religion; and this one true religion is the Christian or Catholic religion in which you and I have had the happiness to be born. It is called *Christian*, because the Divine centre of all its mysteries is Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man; Catholic, which means Universal, because it embraces all times, all people, and all places.

Religion, considered as a whole, may be classed under three great divisions:—The first contains the truths that we must believe, because God has revealed them to us; the second contains the duties that we must practise, shows forth virtue and vice, and is called Christian morality; the third contains those means of sanctification and salvation which God presents to us, treats of the sacraments, of prayer, and of Divine worship.

The first part of these instructions is addressed more especially to the intellect; the second to the heart; and the third to the emotions; that is to say, to the soul in all its relations with the world around us.

An explanation of the Credo, or the Apostles' Creed, constitutes the first part; an explanation of the Commandments of God and the Church constitutes the second; an explanation of the Seven Sacraments, the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation, and religious ceremonies, constitute the third.

Let us then listen with attention, and reap as much advantage as we can.

I BELIEVE.

RELIGION, we have said, is the sacred bond by which God is united to us and we are united to God; and that as there is but one true God, so there is but one true religion, which is the Christian religion. We have added that its teaching may be divided into three parts, namely: 1. the truths that we must believe because God has revealed them to us, 2. the duties we must practise because God has imposed them upon us; 3. the means of sanctification and salvation that we must employ because God has offered them to us.

The truths that God proposes to us to be believed are contained and summed up in a kind of prayer or formula of faith called the *Apostles' Creed.*

The Apostles of Jesus Christ composed it at Jerusalem, before they dispersed to spread throughout the world the light of the Gospel.

Doubtless, you know, dear reader, this Apostles' Creed or Credo. Still, on the chance that you may have partly forgotten it, allow me to recite it with you:—

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary: suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell, the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

Let us explain the first word: I believe, Credo. *To believe* is to admit anything upon the testimony of another. When an honest man speaks to us, we believe him, do we not, because we have confidence in his word? If we believe an honest man, how much more must we believe God, who has deigned to reveal Himself to us *through patriarchs* and prophets, and then by His only Son

Jesus Christ, Founder of the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, to which He entrusted the charge of religion, with the promise of His Divine assistance even to the end of the world.

We accept the teaching of God, which the Church proposes through *Faith*. Without it we could have no knowledge of God, and it is the necessary foundation of the whole fabric of our religion.

Faith is that holy disposition of the soul which enables us to receive with docility the light of God and the teaching of His Church, and to receive it moreover from a supremely rational motive, because God is truth itself, and His Church guided by Him can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Faith teaches us mysteries, that is to say, truths which we can know but cannot understand. Nevertheless we are perfectly rational in believing these mysteries, because we know that the voice which teaches them is truth itself.

Just as a child is rational when he believes the word of the kind mother who directs his inexperience; even so, we Christians are supremely rational when we listen with docility to the rightful pastors of the Church, sent by God to make known to us His laws to teach us how we may truly serve Him and eternally save our souls.

Further we shall see how the only *rightful* pastors of the faithful are the Pope and the Catholic Bishops, successors of St. Peter and the Apostles.

Let us then stir up our faith, and utter with a greater earnestness and a still stronger conviction the great word which leads us to God: Credo!

Yes, I believe what our fathers believed, what the holy Apostles and the martyrs believed, and what so many great minds and learned men have since believed. I believe in this Divine religion which has changed the face of the earth, which has civilised the world, which has constituted all modern societies, which is the sole support and safeguard of nations and of empires! I desire to live and to die in this holy faith, to find in it my consolation in all grief and trouble, to learn from it to be good and virtuous; and when breathing my last and about to appear before God, that my last thought and my supreme hope may be still *an act of faith!* Credo!

WHETHER WE MUST BELIEVE WHAT WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND.

PÈRE LACORDAIRE was dining one day at a *table d'hôte* in some provincial town. Every one knows that Père Lacordaire was a celebrated preacher, a religious of the Order of Dominicans, and renowned throughout France for his great talent and brilliant intellect.

At a *table d'hôte* there is a great medley of guests—an indiscriminate gathering of young and old, dull and intelligent. The priest was taking his modest repast in silence; not far from him, a certain commercial traveller was dining and declaiming, well satisfied with himself, and entirely wanting in that proper reserve which is the effect of a good education. It was on Friday a day of abstinence, and therefore a fertile occasion for commercial travellers dining at a *table d'hôte* to show openly that they are quite superior to what they term ancient prejudices.

After indulging in many witticisms against abstinence, bigotry, superstition, &c., this great talker, observing the unknown religious by a sidelong glance, grew impatient that his words appeared to produce so little effect upon him, and addressed him pointedly as he passed him a dish of omelets from which he had taken much more than his share. "For my part, monsieur," he said sneeringly, "I make it a rule not to believe what I cannot understand. . . . is not that reasonable?" "Monsieur," answered Père Lacordaire politely, as he helped himself to the remnant of the omelet which his questioner had been willing to leave to him, "do you understand how it is that the fire which makes iron and lead soft has made these eggs hard?"

"Upon my word, I know nothing about it," answered the commercial traveller, puzzled by this singular question.

"Nor I," answered the religious, "but I see with pleasure that that does not prevent you from believing in omelets."

And yourself, reader, could you give me a solution of the problem proposed by Père Lacordaire? Could you tell me why the same fire produces upon iron and upon an egg precisely opposite effects? No, certainly not; and no *man on earth*, from the most humble of scullions to the

most scholarly of savants, can explain it. Yet nevertheless, scholars and scullions, all the *world believes* in omelets.

Remember this witty repartee when you hear it said, in workshops or elsewhere, that it is not reasonable to believe in the mysteries of religion because we should not believe what we cannot understand. Nothing is more feeble than this pretension made by ignorant people. Scientific men know by experience that it is necessary to be humble learners, and that there are in nature, as in religion, a crowd of *mysteries*, facts which it is impossible to doubt, yet which at the same time we cannot understand. We *believe* them without *understanding* them.

Have you ever reflected that, in all which concerns yourself, you are surrounded by *mysteries* which you cannot disbelieve, but which you cannot understand? Do you know *how* you hear me when I speak to you?

I move my tongue and my lips; I agitate by this a little air, which enters into your ear and strikes a skin which we call the tympanum, and then your mind grasps my thought.

Do you understand how that can be? No; but it is certain that you hear those who speak to you. Every time that you are spoken to a *mystery* presents itself, namely, an incomprehensible fact in which you thoroughly believe.

What is sight? You see me when I stand before you; can you understand why you see me, or explain why your eyes, which are two little balls, black and dark within, can make known to you what is passing around you, even to a considerable distance? That sight which you use from morning till evening, and in the reality of which you certainly believe, is a profound and an incomprehensible mystery.

I could go on multiplying examples, and bringing home to you the truth of that which I have just declared, namely, that the works of God are full of mysteries. It is most natural that religion should present to us mysteries to believe, since nature itself, which is more within our range, consists of mysteries.

And mark well that the most clever men are not, on this point, more advanced than we. They make very striking experiments, they establish facts better than we can, they *know details* of which we are ignorant; but of

the cause, the *wherefore*, they know no more than we : the secret belongs to God.

What is heat? What is light? How does wheat grow? How do fruit and flowers spring forth? What is the sun? What are the stars?

God desires to recall to us incessantly, through the mysteries of nature and of religion, that our minds and our whole being depend upon Him, that He is greater than we, and that we must therefore submit ourselves humbly to His word and to His will. This submission we call a reasonable *faith*. The man who refused to believe in the mysteries of nature would be a fool ; the man who refuses to believe in the mysteries of faith is not only senseless but impious also. Let us be neither one nor the other. Let us believe with our whole heart in the teaching of God through His works, even though we do not always understand it. Let us rejoice that we can thus prove that we recognise Him gladly as our all-wise and all-wonderful Lord. He has Himself told us that there are three Persons in one God ; that the second of these Persons, the Son of God, was made man under the name of Jesus Christ ; that the Church is the messenger of Jesus Christ to save men ; He has told us that there is an eternal heaven and an eternal hell. Let us then believe it as firmly as though we saw it with our eyes ; and let us remember the words of our Lord after His resurrection : "*Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed!*"

ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

FÉNÉLON, the great and good Archbishop of Cambray, whose name is honoured even by the irreligious, was walking one evening with a child confided to his fatherly care.

The heavens glittered with a thousand stars. The horizon was still gilded by the last rays of the setting sun. All nature was at rest, beautiful, and sublime. The child asking what hour it was, he drew out his watch. "What a beautiful watch, Monseigneur!" said his young pupil; "will you allow me to look at it?" The Archbishop gave it to him, and as the child examined it closely, "It is a very singular thing, my dear Louis," said Fénélon calmly, "*that that* watch made itself." "Made itself!" repeated

the child, looking at his master with a smile. "Yes, entirely alone. A traveller found it in some desert, and it is quite certain that it made itself." "That is impossible!" young Louis answered; "Monseigneur is laughing at me?" "No, my child, I am not laughing at you. What is there impossible in what I have said?" "But, Monseigneur, a watch could never make itself!" "And why?" "Because so much precision is needed in the arrangement of the thousand little wheels which cause its motion and make the hands keep time, that it requires great intelligence to organise it; and even then, very few men really succeed in spite of all their pains. That such a thing could make itself is absolutely impossible; I shall never believe it; you have been deceived, Monseigneur."

Fénélon embraced the child, and pointing out to him the starlit heavens above their heads, he asked, "What will you say then, my dear Louis, of those who pretend that all the wondrous heavens have not only made themselves, but preserve themselves in an unbroken order, and that there is no God?" "Are there truly men so foolish and so wicked as to say that?" asked Louis. "Yes, dear child, there are those who *say* it; few in number, thank God." "But are there any who believe it?" "I can scarcely credit that there are, considering how entirely they must do violence to their reason, their heart, their instinct, and their good sense, before they can maintain such an opinion. If it be evident that a watch cannot make itself, is it not far more evident of man himself, by whom watches are made? There was a *first* man, for all things have their beginning, and this beginning is universally attested by the history of the human race. It is certain, then, that some one made the first man. This some one is that *Being* who made all beings, who has Himself been made by no one, and whom we call *God*. He is infinite, for there is no limit to His being; He is eternal, that is to say, infinite in duration, without beginning and without end; almighty, just, good, holy, perfect, and infinite in all His perfections. He is everywhere and invisible, and no one can fathom His marvels. It is in Him we live, and move, and have our being. He is our first principle and our last end; and true happiness, both in this world and the next, is to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him."

Such was *the beautiful lesson* that the illustrious Arch-

bishop of Cambray gave to his little companion. He gives it to us also, and we may profit by it to remark once again on the foolishness of those miserable men who dare to doubt the existence of God.

The man who says there is no God is obliged in the same breath to say, "All men in all ages and in all countries have been wrong, and I alone am superior in intellect to all of them." In other words, "I have no *common sense;*" for *common sense* is nothing else but the *common* and universal sentiment of the whole world.

A man who doubts the existence of God is therefore a man who has no common sense.

He is a man utterly void of right understanding. How, for instance, would he solve the plain and simple problem proposed by Fénélon? But it is more the heart than the mind that is sick amongst irreligious men of this stamp.

They are almost always either men destitute of morality, or men who, having superficially adopted the spirit of dangerous books, have given up their religious Belief, and having accepted doubtful assumptions against the Faith, imagine that they have *strong* minds. For such as these one must have *strong* pity.

Real, steadfast, unshaken atheism is only to be found amongst animals. When man desires to live like the animals, he may well ape for a time their absence of religion:

> "Mais au moindre revers funeste,
> Le masque tombe, l'homme reste,
> Et la *bête* s'évanouit." *

How many have been atheists in words, and have suddenly changed when they have stood face to face with death!

A celebrated anatomist has said, "Give me the tongue of a dead dog, and I will make it howl at atheists." "Give me," one might add, "the tongue of an atheist, and I will prove to its owner, by an analysis of the wonders it presents, that he is himself either a madman or a liar."

The surest way to believe in God, is so to live that we

* Lit.: But at the least fatal reverse,
The mask falls, the man remains,
And the beast vanishes.

do not fear His righteous judgments; and to live thus is to practise with care all that religion teaches—to be a good and faithful Catholic.

GOD.

THE first of the truths contained in the Apostles' Creed relates to the existence and the nature of God, our Creator and our Sovereign Master. We shall not insist here upon the existence of this great God—a truth so evident that all people in all ages have unanimously recognised it, notwithstanding human passions, errors, and the prejudices created by false religions. Reason and Faith agree upon this point, and there cannot be upon earth a veritable atheist.

There is one God, Creator of the world, by whom all things were made, and who Himself was made by none, a Being infinite in His essence and in all His ineffable perfections, infinite in His goodness, in His wisdom, in His almighty power; infinite in knowledge and in justice; a pure Spirit who cannot be seen by the *physical* sight, but by the inward light of intelligence; whom we cannot hear with our ears, but who speaks to our hearts; whom we cannot touch with our hands, but to whom we may unite ourselves by love. God is truth, life, holiness, perfection, beauty, and infinite goodness. All that His creatures possess that is good, great, or noble, is but a pale reflection of His goodness, His beauty, and His glory. He is the first principle and the end of all things, most especially of man, who is His adopted son, His living temple, created to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to possess Him eternally in the next.

Such is the grand and sublime belief that the Christian faith gives us. No philosopher has ever conceived anything similar to it, and it has been necessary for God to reveal Himself to us by His prophets, and by Jesus Christ, His only Son, in order to initiate us into the secrets of His being. He has likewise taught us, and we therefore firmly believe, that there are in Him three Persons, essentially distinct and inseparable, equal in all things, having the same infinite and Divine nature, the same adorable perfections, being one and *the same* God. These three Persons are the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is God; the Son is God even as the Father; the Holy Ghost is God even as the Father and the Son; and these three Persons are one God, and not three Gods, one Lord, and not three Lords, one Eternal, and not three Eternals. The Father is invisible, also the Son, also the Holy Ghost. "No one has seen God at any time," says the Gospel, "but His only Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has made Him known unto the world." The Father eternally begets the Son, who is wisdom, truth, and light; from the Father and the Son proceeds eternally the Holy Ghost, who is love and life, the ineffable union of the Father and the Son. Such is the mystery of the Divine nature of one God in three Persons, which is called by faith the Mystery of the *Blessed Trinity*. The Father does all things by His Son through His Holy Spirit, by His wisdom in His love. It is thus that He created the heaven and the earth, by His Son Jesus Christ; and in His holy love all that exists, exists only through God, and rests in Him alone. With the first creature commenced the centuries in the midst of which we live, and out of which we pass to enter into the eternity of God. There are two kinds of creatures—the reasonable, whom God has destined to possess Him in this world and for all eternity; and those without reason, destined to serve others. Creatures gifted with intelligence are angels and men, pure spirits, and spirits united to bodies; creatures without reason are animals, plants, and the whole of creation.

Man, who resembles angels in his soul and material creatures in his body, is the king of the world with Jesus Christ, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, God-made Man.

Amongst the angels, some were faithful to God, and are happy; others revolted through pride, and are damned eternally. The good angels accompany man, and sustain him in the path of right; the wicked angels, whom we call evil spirits or devils, desire to make him join in their revolt, and condemnation, by causing him to fall into sin. The first man, Adam, the father of all, succumbed to temptation, and incurred, both for himself and his children, the chastisement of sin. We shall see further how God deigned to retrieve this great fall, and how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man, came to expiate the sin of Adam, and to restore life, spiritual and eternal, to the work of His *own hands*.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

PROVIDENCE is that *care* which God takes of all His creatures, and especially of His intelligent creature, man.

Those who say that God does not trouble Himself about us are thoughtless, not to say absurd ; for it is *impossible* to conceive the idea of *God* without Providence.

It is *impossible* that the Almighty God, knowing and seeing all things, should abdicate his sovereign empire over His creatures, and that after having made them, He should cease to govern them. It is impossible that God, holy and just, necessarily desiring good, and detesting evil, should remain indifferent to our actions, good and wicked. This is the whole meaning of Providence. God does for us what the father of a family does for his children : He watches over us ; He teaches us what is good and what is evil ; He shows us the right path which we must follow, and the wrong one which we must avoid ; He punishes us when we disobey Him, and rewards us when we do His holy will. What, I ask, could be more simple or natural than this ? When we doubt the Divine Providence, it is from ignorance, or rather forgetfulness, of two or three great truths, without which the world would be an undecipherable enigma.

The first of these truths is, that under the operations of God we remain free to do good or evil. God does not *govern* us as He governs the material world, the stars, the elements, and animals. He treats us as *reasonable* creatures, capable of freely accepting and acquiring the treasure of happiness. He neglects nothing to make us choose the right : instructions, warnings, tender invitations, terrible threats ; He spares nothing. He overwhelms us with His graces ; He surrounds us with help ; *but He does not force us :* to do that would be to destroy His own work. He respects in us the gifts that He has given us.

The second truth, often forgotten, is that this present life is but a preparation for that eternal life which awaits us beyond the grave.

The third, that we are no longer in that pure and perfect state in which God created us, but in a state of moral disorder, and thenceforth of expiation, by reason of sin.

The grace of God has been, it is true, restored to us by Jesus Christ our Redeemer, but in such a manner that Divine justice must still exercise its imprescriptible rights.

Whoever keeps these three fundamental truths of Christianity before his eyes will find that all difficulties with regard to Providence immediately disappear. The world, life, everything appears in a different light. Happiness is no longer, for the Christian, what men of the world call by that name—pleasure, wealth, and worldly glory. Happiness is anything that may most perfectly prepare him for that infinite, ineffable, and eternal blessedness for which this life is only a short preparation; and from that time he understands why Jesus Christ has said in the Gospel, "Blessed are the poor, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that weep, blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Evil becomes an equally different thing ; and, when asking God each day to deliver him from evil, the Christian only asks to be delivered from all that could deprive him of that eternal happiness which is the only real, pure, and unchangeable good. Suffering, tears, and the thousand troubles of this life, are for him henceforth but the just punishment of sin. Religion teaches him that these inevitable trials are but transient afflictions, designed by his loving Father in heaven to prove his fidelity, to purify him from his faults, to render him more like his crucified Saviour, and to cause him to merit a still greater happiness in his eternal home. By the help of religion he bears them with patience, sometimes even with joy, and loves the Fatherly hand which only strikes to save.

Be a Christian, and you will comprehend Providence. If you are *not* a Christian, you can understand nothing that relates to God, to man, to human life, to all that surrounds you. If sometimes, amongst your trials and delusions, there arise in your heart some murmur, some doubt of God's Providence ; if you are tempted to ask why there are so many irregularities of condition in this present life ; why this man is born poor, and that one rich ; why so much trouble and affliction for some, and so much prosperity for others ; why this man should be in such a place, and yourself in another ; why the rigour of the seasons ; why the privations of poverty ; why this want of fortune, *of health,* when health and fortune would be so beneficial

to you; why this guilty man should go unpunished, and this righteous man be overwhelmed by trouble; why the beneficent man should be taken away by death, whilst the wicked man remains;—remember *eternity*, think of Jesus Christ crucified: *there* lies the solution of the problem!

God *is patient because He is eternal.* He rewards by the fleeting prosperity of the world the little good which may be done by this wicked man, this great sinner, who shall reap in a terrible eternity the punishment he deserves. And, as regards the righteous, accounted by the world unfortunate, God is causing them to expiate by short affliction those faults which are inseparable from human weakness, whilst He prepares for them an eternal crown by which their virtue shall be everlastingly rewarded. *Eternity is the justification of Divine Providence.—It is by the measure of eternity that we must judge all that happens to us in this world.* In any other way it is, we repeat, impossible that we should understand any of the designs of God. All that God does is well done, and if He permit evil, it is always for the sake of a greater good.

AN ANECDOTE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

A POOR woman, who is still living, received formerly a double portion of food every day from a religious house. This consisted of a dinner for herself and her aged husband, a cobbler by trade, but who was at that time without employment.

Poor from her childhood, she had learned by a painful experience to pity the poor; she had compassion for the miseries of hunger and the pangs of destitution because she had known them herself. She lived in a wretched cottage, where, notwithstanding her own distress, she gladly welcomed those who were still poorer than herself, and often found means of helping them. Amongst the number was a poor orphan child eight years old, to whom she always gave a portion of her scanty repast. One day as she returned home with her usual basket of food, he was watching for her at the door. "I am so hungry, mother," he cried when he saw her coming; "do give me something to eat; I have not had anything to-day."

"Here, my child," she answered, "eat at once, but leave me a little, for I too have had no breakfast to-day." He began eating so eagerly, she had not the heart to interrupt him, and the dinner rapidly disappeared. When it was all gone, the child flung his arms affectionately round his kind friend, kissed her and thanked her, and went away singing. The good woman standing at her door watched him till he was out of sight. "And my dinner too," she thought, "is gone, and what will my poor husband say? what *can* I give him?"

As she was indulging in these sad reflections, her attention was attracted by a little white dog running rapidly towards her, followed closely by a large mastiff. The puppy held in its mouth something almost as large as itself, which, as it came nearer, she saw to be an enormous slice of bread. It ran straight up to the poor woman, put the bread down at her feet without touching it, and escaped in another direction. The large dog stopped some little distance off. Stupified, the good woman picked up the bread, lying upon it there was also a large slice of meat, enough to make a good repast! She returned to the house.

"Oh, my God!" she cried, falling on her knees, and shedding tears of joy, "in this way Thou dost restore to me the dinner of which I had deprived myself for Thy sake!" This was *the dinner of Providence!* No dinner had ever been eaten in that pious household with so good an appetite, and the poor woman might have been heard singing merrily all that evening, so light-hearted did she feel at this mark of God's protection!

THE DEVIL.

THE Catholic Faith teaches that a spirit exists whom we call the *devil* or the *demon*, and who exerts his power for evil in the world, to try the fidelity of Christians and to punish the sins of men. One would be a heretic who dared to deny this point of Christian doctrine, and to pretend that the devil is not a living, personal being. Just as we ourselves consist of two constituent principles, the one spiritual and invisible, which is the *soul*, the other mate-

rial and visible, which is the body; even so the world consists of two orders of creatures, the spiritual and invisible, who are *spirits*, the material and visible, who are bodies. Our soul is that power which animates and gives action to our body; spirits, although in a different manner, do also constitute a hidden force, and are therefore able to influence material bodies, and to communicate to them certain qualities, certain developments, and different impulses. Amongst these spirits, whose number is incalculable, there are many who are in rebellion against God, who are engaged in contest with the good spirits, and are endeavouring by all possible means to bring disorder into the world, and to disturb its harmony.

The faithful spirits are called *angels*, that is, messengers of God; the rebellious spirits are called *demons*, from a Greek word which signifies evil spirit; or rather *devils*, from another Greek word, which signifies adversary, enemy, disturber.

The most powerful of the good angels is called by the Church the Archangel Saint *Michael*, which name signifies—None is like to God; the chief of the wicked spirits is called *Lucifer*, which means Light-bearer, because it is the vocation of this spirit to preside over light; and also Satan, which means the Rebel. He is commonly called the devil (although there are many others), because he is the head and representative of them all.

The devil is our personal enemy, because, created in the image of Jesus Christ, we are destined to be, both on earth and in heaven, the children of that God whose holy authority Satan rejects.

He attacks us in all manner of ways, and tries especially to make us sin, so that, separated from Jesus Christ, we may lose the happiness of heaven.

The devil tempts us either directly or indirectly; *directly*, by suggesting to us thoughts of pride, guilty desires, wicked and perverse inclinations, by turning us away from prayer, from Holy Communion, from the service of God, and from good works; *indirectly*, by means of what the Gospel calls "the world," sinful examples, the corrupting influences of bad society and sinful pleasures. Thus Satan labours incessantly, either personally or by means of sinners who are his servants, to bring us to ruin.

Let us guard *against* temptations. The enemy is power-

ful and subtle; let us be stronger and more active than he. If we are faithful to prayer, to frequent Communion, to good reading, if we avoid all dangerous occasions, we have nothing to fear, and our Saviour, who dwells within us, will speak to our hearts and say, as He said to His first Disciples, "Have confidence; I have overcome the world. Abide in me, and I in you." If, on the contrary, we live habitually in religious indifference, if we neglect prayer and the Sacraments, if pernicious literature furnish us with food for thought, if we do not fly from dangerous occasions, our ruin is certain. God has Himself declared it: "He who despises small things shall fall little by little. He who loves danger shall perish in it." What power has an unarmed man against a terrible lion? St. Peter says to all Christians, "Be sober and watch; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist ye, strong in faith." Satan is therefore the instigator of all sin; he is the only author of all the evil which happens on this earth—all diseases, all the disorders of nature, all epidemics, droughts, inundations, famines, all misery, sorrow, suffering, death; in one word, all evil is the work of the devil. God being in truth infinite goodness, cannot be in any sense the author of evil; and one of the most perfidious artifices of Satan is to tempt us to assume the reverse, and to become irritated against God when we suffer, as if it were God who was doing us harm. The Holy Scripture shows us clearly the disastrous influence that the devil has over us in the well-known history of Job. Hordes of robbers carried off in one day all the flocks and possessions of this holy man; a violent wind came from the desert and overthrew the house in which his children lived, depriving him thus of all his family; a frightful sickness struck him, covering him with a grievous leprosy, burning his blood, and withering his bones; lastly, poverty overwhelmed him with its horrible privations, and he took refuge on a dunghill, where his friends, and even his wife, came to insult him, and to persuade him to curse God.

What is the real and secret cause of all these evils? God teaches us Himself: it is Satan, it is the devil, who has obtained from the Lord permission to try Job.

But God, who brings good out of evil, makes use of the *wickedness* of Lucifer and the rebellious angels to sanctify

His servants. He does not prevent this revolt, any more than He prevents *us* from sinning, because angels are free as men, and to take from them this liberty would be to destroy His own work. Devils, like men, have then the power to do evil; but God makes use of the wickedness of Satan and the other devils to make us expiate our sins by many different trials, and also to cause us to practise very excellent virtues, which prepare for us in heaven an incomparable increase of happiness. One of the greatest misfortunes of the age is that, in practice at least, people believe no longer in the devil. And thus he sports with victims who desire to believe no longer in the existence of their tormentor.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THE devil has no adversary more formidable than the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Saviour, and Queen of the Church.

An error sufficiently common in these days is to regard devotion to the Blessed Virgin as amongst those religious practices which are undoubtedly good, but not essential to Christianity. This indifference towards the Mother of God proceeds from an indifference very common and still more deplorable—an indifference, alas! to the Son of God Himself, even our Lord Jesus Christ; and this does not usually arise from wickedness or evil intentions, but simply from ignorance.

The Christian religion is the knowledge, love, and service of God, taught to men by Jesus Christ, God made man; and Jesus Christ is man only through the agency of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is thus the way by which God came down to us. The Son of God has, then, a Father, who is the almighty, infinite, and unapproachable God, also a Mother, who is Mary, the highest, the holiest of creatures. In order for *God* to become *Jesus*, that is to say, our Saviour and our Brother, Mary was, by the divine decrees, as necessary as the Eternal Father; and in the sacred mystery of the Incarnation, the foundation of all Christianity, it is impossible to separate these three names—God, Jesus, Mary,

Even as Jesus Christ has come to us through His holy Mother, it is through her that we must go to Him. Jesus may be compared to a fragrant flower; His divinity, invisible and entirely spiritual, is the perfume of the flower; His humanity, visible and entirely penetrated by divinity, is the flower itself, and the stem which supports the flower and has produced it is the Virgin Mary. If you desire to have the perfume you must necessarily have the flower, and you cannot take the flower but by the stem which bears it. Thus to reach God it is absolutely necessary to be a Christian, namely, to know and to serve Jesus Christ; and to be a Christian, you must love the Blessed Virgin and give to her the honour that she merits.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, of which we are all the members. From this Divine Head flow the life and strength which animate the members; the necessary channel through which the Church receives all that is given to her by God, is the Blessed Virgin.

It is easy to understand how Protestant sects, which reject the Blessed Virgin, do at the same time unintentionally and unconsciously reject our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. But we, being Catholics, continue in the truth; one might add that we continue by this means in love, and in the most consoling confidence. What can we fear? We have not only a God who has made Himself our Brother and our Redeemer, but this Redeemer, whose Divine Majesty we might have still feared by reason of our sins, gives to us a mediatrix between Himself and us, the sweet and most merciful Virgin Mary His Mother, a simple creature like ourselves, and who having all manner of justice to exercise against sinners, can only inspire them with confidence and hope. Therefore, if we have recourse to Mary we need never be discouraged, and, great sinners though we may be, at the moment we sincerely repent, we feel assured that we shall be favourably received by our Father and our Judge, to whose feet our dear Mother leads us. How often, in the life-time of a family, it has happened that a mother has obtained from a justly angry father the pardon of a guilty child! The Church is the great family of the children of God; and the Blessed Virgin was constituted upon Calvary Mother and Protectress of the Church as well as of each of its members.

Let us be Christians, and render to the Mother of God

the homage that is due to her; let us never pronounce but with reverence her sacred name; let us often salute her by one of those beautiful prayers with which the Holy Spirit has inspired the Church, and of which the most wonderful is also the simplest. You have known it from your childhood: it is the Ave Maria, that sweet and heavenly prayer first uttered by the Angel Gabriel upon the day of the Annunication.

Let us always wear some sign of our devotion towards Mary, the medal or the scapular of the Immaculate Conception. Let us endeavour to keep in our room a statue or a picture of the Blessed Virgin; and when our heart is oppressed by sadness, when the trials of life weigh too heavily upon us, when temptations assail us with greater violence, let us turn our eyes to the image of our Protectress, and entreat the omnipotent Queen of Heaven never to abandon us, and to shed upon us the blessings of her Divine Son.

Thus Mary will always preserve us in the service of Jesus Christ, which is no other than the service of God.

MARY IMMACULATE.

On the 8th of December 1854, the city of Rome witnessed one of the greatest religious acts which has ever stirred the hearts of Christians since the foundation of the Church. The supreme Head of Religion, the Sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar and representative of our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth, defined as an article of faith the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Let us meditate for a moment on this memorable event, and on the glorious mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.

Our holy Father, Pope Pius IX., is the two hundred and fifty-eighth successor of St. Peter, chief of the apostles, and the first Pope. Pius IX., like all the Pontiffs his predecessors, and like St. Peter himself, is the Vicar of Jesus Christ, His visible representative amongst us. He is the spiritual head of all Bishops, of all Priests, of all Christians; he is commissioned by God to govern the Church, to teach it all that must be believed, and to lead

it in the way of salvation. The Pope is a man like to ourselves; nevertheless, when we obey him, and when we surround him with reverence and love, it is God Himself whom we obey, it is the authority of God that we reverence and love, because, *man* though he be, he is invested with the spiritual power of our Lord. When the Pope teaches, it is therefore Jesus Christ who teaches; when the Pope commands or forbids, it is Jesus Christ who commands or forbids.

In 1854 the Pope Pius IX. judged, in his wisdom, that the time was come to render to the Blessed Virgin Mary the most brilliant homage that she has ever received from Christians. Consequently, after having long communed with God in prayer, after having desired the prayers of the whole Catholic Church, after having interrogated all the bishops in the world, he convoked at Rome, for the 8th of December, the Feast of the Conception of Mary, all those bishops whom the care of their flocks left free to respond to his call.

A hundred and ninety-six cardinals, archbishops, and bishops assembled to surround the Sovereign Pontiff in this great solemnity, and to bear witness of the faith of their dioceses and their countries.

Everything favoured this glorious fête. The weather was as calm and clear as in the most beautiful days of spring.

All the streets and houses of Rome were decorated with flags, and the immense Basilica of St. Peter's threw open its gates from the early dawn to an innumerable concourse of the faithful, who had hastened from the four quarters of the world. The French army, which has maintained a garrison at Rome since 1849 for the defence of the temporal sovereignty of the Pope, was drawn up in grand array in the space around St. Peter's.

Towards nine o'clock the Sovereign Pontiff left the Palace of the Vatican, preceded by a long file of prelates, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals in their richest vestments, walking two and two, whilst reciting the Litanies of the Saints.

Amongst their number were twenty-one bishops of France, including the poor Archbishop of Paris, Monsigneur Sibour, who afterwards perished by the sacrilegious hand of a furious enemy of the Blessed Virgin.

Many Eastern patriarchs and bishops might have been distinguished by the particular shape of their mitres and their sacerdotal vestments.

The holy Father, clad in an immense white cope embroidered with gold, and crowned with the sacred tiara, was carried, according to custom, on his throne, sheltered by a floating canopy of silk and gold, and scattered the divine benediction over the reverent kneeling crowd.

The Pope himself celebrated the holy mass. A magnificent chalice of massive gold, resplendent with diamonds, had been prepared for the offering of the holy sacrifice. After the gospel, the Pope took his place upon a raised throne at the extremity of the Basilica, and in front of the altar. The cardinals and bishops were ranged on his right and left, wearing their white mitres and rich vestments of cloth of silver embossed with gold. The oldest of the cardinals and the oldest of the bishops, accompanied by the Catholic Patriarch of the Greek Church, approaching, knelt at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, asking him, in the name of the Holy Catholic Church, to be willing to decree as a dogma of faith, that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord, our Creator, and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, had been exempted from the universal stain of original sin, and that she was consequently immaculate in her conception. The Pope rose.

A deep emotion filled the whole assembly. He intoned the Veni Creator to ask for the last time the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit; then, in the midst of a silence so profound that all the faithful could distinctly hear his voice, he read the decree of faith :—

"By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own, we declare and define that the Blessed Virgin Mary has been, from the first moment of her conception, preserved from all stain of original sin, and that this doctrine is revealed by God. If any dare to think otherwise, let him know that he is condemned, and that he has departed from the Catholic Faith."

Such was the sense of the pontifical decree. The holy Father was so deeply moved that he could scarcely command his voice, and was often obliged to pause. All eyes were filled with tears, and even those who had come, attracted by curiosity, to witness so grand a ceremonial,

were won, in spite of themselves, by the display of such powerful Christian emotion.

The whole world responded by a prolonged acclamation of joy and gratitude to the infallible voice of the successor of St. Peter. The glory of Mary was universally celebrated; and for more than six months the religious journals were filled with descriptions of continual rejoicings. Many towns in France, Germany, and elsewhere were solemnly consecrated to the Immaculate Virgin. Commemorative statues were everywhere erected, and in France a national subscription was set on foot with the purpose of erecting in the centre of the country, on the summit of the rock which rises above the town of Puy, a colossal statue of Mary Immaculate, for which purpose the Emperor gave all the necessary metal from the Russian cannons taken at Sebastopol.

It is not by such means as these that *we* can show devotion to the Mother of God; but let us try with our whole heart to prove it, in every way we can. We will always keep her image in our rooms, and let it be more precious to us than anything except the crucifix. We will always wear a medal representing Mary, conceived without sin; and we will never allow a day to pass without entreating the help of our powerful Protectress and most merciful Mother. Let us love the Blessed Virgin as Jesus loved her first. Yet this will be no easy task, for we can never love her, can never honour her, so much as He did. Let us imitate the sanctity of our dear Mother, her purity, her humility, her sweetness, her life of laborious poverty, her faithfulness in little things; but more than all, let us imitate her intense and unutterable love for Jesus, and let us so live that when our race is run she shall know us for her children, and conduct us to an eternal rest in the glorious paradise of the redeemed.

THE ANNUNCIATION AND THE INCARNATION.

On a certain 25th of March, 4004 years after the creation of Adam and Eve, 2957 years after the Deluge, 1510 *years since* Moses delivered the people of God, 1032 years

after the consecration of the royalty of David, 752 years after the foundation of Rome, and on the anniversary of the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, the Lord God, Almighty and All-merciful, sent the Archangel Gabriel to a Virgin of the name of Mary, living in the little town of Nazareth in Galilee, to announce to her the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Mary was then about fourteen, and was betrothed to Joseph, her near relation, descended like herself from the royal race of David, and of the tribe of Juda. Immaculate and purer than the angels, sweet and full of humility, the Blessed Virgin awaited, with the whole of Israel, the coming of the Divine Redeemer announced from the foundation of the world. She knew not that she was destined to be the Mother of the King of Heaven; and in her loving humility she prayed that she might even be the handmaid of her who should be blessed amongst women.

According to ancient tradition it was at noonday, on the 25th of March, that the Archangel Gabriel, clothed in human form, and radiant with the light of heaven, appeared to Mary, who was praying at the time in a grotto hewn from the solid rock of the hill at the foot of which her house was built, as were all the houses of Nazareth. This grotto has been converted into a chapel, and may be seen, and is still venerated, in the village of Nazareth.

The holy house of Mary and Joseph, which formed the front of this grotto, was miraculously transported, by the command of God, to Loretto in Italy, in the year 1291, and pilgrims of the whole world may kneel beneath the shadow of those walls which for thirty years were sanctified by the presence of the Incarnate Word, of the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph.

"Hail, full of grace!" said the Archangel with deep reverence, "the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women." At the sight of the angel, and at this unlooked-for salutation, the Virgin was troubled, and asked herself what it could mean. "Fear not, Mary," said the heavenly messenger, "for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus (that is to say, Saviour). He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His

father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

In her childhood Mary had taken the vow of perpetual virginity; Joseph also was bound by this vow; and if Mary had consented to marry him, it was only that she might have a protector of her youth and innocence, and a sure guide in the path of holiness. When the Archangel Gabriel announced to her that she was destined to become a mother, Mary, fearful for the glory of her holy virginity, asked immediately how that was possible, since she was for ever consecrated to God.

Then the angel, explaining to her the designs of God, reassured her, and declared to her that this maternity, as much above all other maternities as the heavens are above the earth, should be a miracle beyond all miracles, and should cast no shadow on her perfect purity. "The Holy Ghost," he said, "shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And as a sign that God was working wonders above all human reason, Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin the miraculous conception of St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of the adorable Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, of whom she should herself become the mother. "Behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren. Because no word shall be impossible with God."

Then the most Holy Virgin, completely annihilating herself before the adorable will of God, became possessed of an unutterable joy, and of a love more intense than the love of cherubims and seraphims; and thus she gave her efinite consent to the divine proposition, and lifting up her heart to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, answered in the words which have been the world's salvation, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word." And at that very instant the Eternal Word, equal in all things to the Father and the Holy Spirit, the living God, Creator of all that exists, King and Lord of men, Ruler of heaven and earth, became incarnate in the womb of Mary, since He formed for Himself a body from the very substance of the body of the Blessed *Virgin, created* a soul which He united to this body; and

thus united His own divine and eternal person to this soul and to this body in the womb of Mary, that GOD became truly *man*, truly the son of Mary, whilst she became truly His mother, truly the Mother of GOD.

The Blessed Virgin is indeed the mother of Him who is both God and man, true God and true man, and who unites within Himself, in an indivisible manner, the divine and human nature. This title and this glory of being MOTHER OF GOD surpasses all that God has ever done, or ever could do, for a simple creature. By this name alone the Virgin Mary is raised incalculably above all saints, all angels, and archangels, and celestial powers, above all cherubim and seraphim, who are only, after all, the servants of that God of whom MARY is the mother. By virtue of her divine maternity, Mary has become the queen of heaven, the queen of the Church, the queen of saints, the queen of the whole world. Let us therefore, like the angel Gabriel, salute her every day with mingled love and reverence; for thus the faithful upon earth may unite themselves to the faithful in heaven, saying, with heartfelt devotion, to their mother, and their well-beloved queen: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

Every year, on the 25th of March, the Church celebrates the anniversary of that day, for ever blessed, on which the Holy Virgin consented to the mystery of the Incarnation, and gave to the world its Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

BETHLEHEM AND THE CHILD JESUS.

FROM the hour of the annunciation, Mary bore within her sacred womb our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. A living ciborium, Mary contained and bore amongst men, the body and the blood, the soul and the divinity, of the Saviour. She enclosed the whole world, the God of heaven, He whom seraphims and angels continually adore!

Nine months after, on the 24th of December, Joseph and Mary reached the little town of Bethlehem, the city of David, there to be enrolled, according to the decree

of Cæsar Augustus, who then commanded the whole world.

The divine prophecies were thus unconsciously fulfilled by Augustus, and it was an unquestioned fact amongst the Jews that the Christ, the Messias, should be born at Bethlehem, and descended from King David. On arriving at Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary found that there was no room for them in the inn; the night was approaching, and they found themselves obliged to go out of the town and to seek shelter in a grotto, which for many centuries had been a place of refuge for shepherds and their flocks. According to ancient religious traditions, David, Abraham, and Noah had frequently sought an asylum in this grotto, and at the very beginning of the human race Seth, the son of Adam, who had filled the place of Abel, had taken refuge there to pray.

Towards midnight the Blessed Virgin was warned by God that the moment was come in which the Word incarnate should appear to the eyes of His creatures. Then she clothed herself in the white raiment she had brought for that hour, and prepared, with St. Joseph, a little hay and straw in a manger, and the swaddling clothes upon the straw. There Mary kneeling, lifted up her arms to heaven, and became absorbed in a blissful ecstasy, all holy and divine she knelt, the Virgin Mother of God.

A heavenly light enveloped her, and suddenly in the midst of this light there appeared to her enraptured vision the holy infant Jesus, all radiant with glory; He looked at her with love, and stretched out His little arms. Then Mary, full of joy, adored Him as her God, and taking Him in her arms, she held Him to her heart, and covered Him with tears and kisses. Then she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in the manger; Joseph on one side and Mary on the other, kneeling and prostrate before the Lord, were as the two cherubim of gold before the ark of the alliance, they were the first to adore God made man, and they adored Him in the name of heaven and earth, with one faith, one love, and an unutterable fervour.

At the very same hour a great miracle took place in a neighbouring field, where shepherds were watching their flocks during the silence of the night. An ancient tradition relates that there were three; an old man, a young man, *and a child.* A bright light suddenly shone round them,

and an angel of the Lord stood by them: "Behold," he said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people: For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will. Then the shepherds being struck with amazement said one to another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us." And they came with haste: and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in a manger. Then they adored Him, received His first benedictions, and returned to their flocks glorifying and praising God. Thus the child Jesus chose from amongst the poor His first worshippers and earliest disciples. Having Himself become poor for love of us, our Lord makes choice of the poor before the rich, and gives to them this consolation amongst all the troubles and privations by which they are overwhelmed.

Nevertheless, a little time after, the rich, and wise, and noble were admitted in their turn to adore the holy Child of Bethlehem. They were called Magi, and came from the East. A star, a miraculous light, warned them of the birth of the Saviour, and they immediately departed, carrying with them rich gifts, until they also arrived at Bethlehem; then, their earnest faith piercing the veil which hid from their eyes the divinity of our Lord Jèsus Christ, they prostrated themselves at His feet, adored Him as their God, and offered to Him gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Rich and poor, we are each and all of us called upon thus to believe in and adore the infant Jesus; the little child in the manger at Bethlehem is verily our God, the one true, living, and eternal God, who for love of us came down from heaven to earth. Not content with abasing His infinite Majesty to the very level of His creatures by becoming their Master and their Brother, He did still more, since He took upon Himself the whole burden of sin by which they had been eternally lost, and thus all are saved who believe and hope in Jesus Christ, who adore Him, and return Him love for love, and who are obedient

in all things to His holy Church; and all who remain faithful unto death are assured of the eternal happiness of heaven. Jesus Christ is the Lord our God, and in His eternal glory He is infinitely worthy of our homage and adoration; but He is also our very tender, very merciful child Saviour, and in His willing abjection He is infinitely worthy of our love.

And what dignity could be greater or more sublime than that of the Blessed Virgin?

Still Mary, like Jesus, merits our love as much as our veneration: she is as good as she is great, as gentle as she is pure, as merciful as she is perfect and holy!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph! names full of blessing and salvation! How happy we are to have so merciful a God, and ever near Him two such powerful intercessors!

Let us live, like Mary and Joseph, quiet peaceful lives, all filled with love of the child Jesus, who reposes in our hearts as in a second manger, a manger which is often, alas! as cold and comfortless as that of Bethlehem.

Let us, like the shepherds, go with fervour, with love, with gladness, and above all with a lively faith, into our churches, where we can always find the Child of Bethlehem hidden and humiliated there, as once within the swaddling clothes, so now beneath the veils of the most holy Eucharist.

The Catholic Church is the thrice-honoured Bethlehem which possesses and encloses Jesus Christ, and which by giving Him to faithful hearts, consoles all the sorrows of humanity, and saves the world by teaching it to know, to serve, and to love the Saviour.

NAZARETH.

After His birth at Bethlehem the holy child Jesus was carried by His mother and St. Joseph into Egypt, in order to escape the persecution of Herod. He remained there two years and a half, and it is related in the traditions of that country that many great and touching miracles signalised the presence of the Infant God. Amongst others it is said that a little child was cured of leprosy by being bathed in the water which the Blessed Virgin had used to wash *her Divine* Son, and that this child, who as he grew up fell

into sin, was the penitent thief, saved a second time by Jesus upon Calvary.

When the tyrant Herod was dead, the Holy Family returned to Judea, and went to live at Nazareth in Galilee, in the same house where the annunciation of the Angel Gabriel had taken place, and where the Son of God was first made man within the womb of Mary. There Jesus grew up under the eyes of His mother and His adopted father. There, until the age of thirty, in prayer, in silence, in the most profound humility, in poverty and work, in tears and penance, He prepared the great work of the world's salvation, which He preached for two years and a half before He consummated it upon the Cross, and returned triumphant to His eternal glory.

The *hidden life* of our Lord at Nazareth is one of the most instructive and consoling mysteries of Christianity. It is the most direct, efficacious, and powerful remedy for the vanity which incessantly urges us to seek for human glory, to desire worldly praise and approbation, and to fear the gaze of men more than the eye of God. From the poor and simple home at Nazareth, Jesus speaks to each and all, and says, "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you do also." Let us be then disciples of Jesus, like our Master, and for love of our Master, meek and humble of heart; let us turn aside from the flattering delusions of self-love, let us each day restrain the pride which renders us arrogant and self-sufficient, which urges us to rebel against the authority of our parents, our priests, and other lawful superiors, which prevents us acknowledging all our sins in confession, and which leads us into all manner of wrong-doing. Let us rather humiliate ourselves constantly and courageously, like our most holy Master, and learn to live unnoticed and unknown, poor and insignificant, in the midst of a world which understands nothing of divine truths, and which cares and seeks for nothing but the soap-bubbles of glory, honour, and riches, dignity, grandeur, and praise.

Until the age of thirty the Son of God was willing to live entirely and constantly subject to Mary and to Joseph. "*Et erat subditus illis;* and He was subject to them." And this is all the Gospel tells us! What a lesson for young men, *true scions* of this age of progress,—who, on

their first entrance into life, seem seized with the spirit of insubordination; who imagine that even at fifteen or sixteen years old it is no longer *fitting* that they should *obey* either father or *mother;* and that to confess their sins, to pray, and to go to church, are actions unworthy of a young man! They dream of *freedom, independence,* and *liberty,* whilst their enfeebled minds cannot rise to any right comprehension of the noble examples which shine forth from that home at Nazareth. They cannot understand that parental and religious authority is the greatest safeguard of youth, and can in no way destroy its happiness. They blush to obey; because they are, they say, "men": as if Jesus were not a *man* in a most eminent degree, God made *man;* a man, the model of all men! and it was not only until ten or twelve years, it was not only until fifteen or sixteen years of age that Jesus obeyed, and was willing to obey to give us an example, *exemplum dedi vobis;* it was until eighteen, until twenty, until twenty-five, yes, even until thirty years, that He was obedient and "subject." Alas! how few of us, in this present generation, would feel in our right element in that holy simple home at Nazareth! It would be necessary first for our lives to be so transformed that the atmosphere of our Saviour's sacred retreat should be similar to that of our *own* homes and daily surroundings. The natural atmosphere of a true Christian is humility, obedience, gentleness, and recollection; in one word, it is Jesus Christ Himself; Jesus Christ known (and how few know Him to-day); Jesus Christ loved (and how few love Him truly); Jesus Christ imitated (alas! does not the number of those who imitate Him recall only too forcibly the ten just men of Sodom!)

Mary and Joseph, whilst commanding their well-beloved Jesus, were guided only by His example, by His words, by His whole life, which was to them the divine school of perfect sanctity. Eternity alone will reveal to us the ineffable progress made by these two privileged and ever-faithful souls in this school of God! The life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph was a life of peace and love, of perfect simplicity and holiness, of penance, work, and prayer! They gladly accepted all the privations of their severe poverty. . . . Jesus had but one thought—the perfect accomplishment of the will of His Father in Heaven, and of Mary and of Joseph upon earth, since their will was to Him the earthly shadow

of that heavenly will: Mary and Joseph lived by His example in incomparable subjection to that heavenly will which Jesus made clear to them. And they all lived from day to day simply intent on doing well all that they did; and the holy Virgin and the holy Joseph, amidst the shadows of the purest, most unquestioning faith, adored the mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of that long silence of the Word made flesh, the mystery of that hidden life at Nazareth and of those long years which seem to human wisdom time *lost* in the redemption of the world.

Joseph died happily and peacefully at Nazareth, in the midst of these luminous shadows, in the arms of Jesus and Mary, tenderly watched and cared for by Him who is "the resurrection and the life." Happy he who falls asleep like Joseph in the love of Jesus and Mary, after a pure and simple life passed in prayer and work, in penance and obscurity. Saint Joseph, we can well understand, is the patron of a happy death.

Let us think of Nazareth when work grows hard and wearisome, when the yoke of a simple, unassuming life becomes galling to our pride, when we are carried away by foolish gusts of worldly vanity, when self-love urges us to seek distinction, and especially when the spirit of independence whispers in our ears the seductive theories of false liberty. . . . O Jesus! save us from these insidious temptations; and help us to comprehend still more clearly the sanctifying mystery of Thy hidden life at Nazareth!

JESUS CHRIST.

We have seen what faith truly is; we have seen how entirely worthy of God and of ourselves is that idea which Christianity gives us of our Creator, the almighty and eternal Lord, infinite and supreme; one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

But this infinite God would have been utterly unknown to us if He had not, in His love, revealed Himself. This is what He has been doing ever since the commencement of the world, by the ministry of His angels, by the inspiration of patriarchs and prophets, and more than all by the incarnation of His own beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary about forty centuries after the fall of Adam. The coming of our Lord is the central point to which all ages tend, and round that one event all the past and future hopes and possibilities of the human race eternally revolve.

To say all that Jesus Christ is, would be beyond the possibilities of human speech.

He is the invisible God become visible, and appearing in the midst of His creatures; He is the infinite, eternal, and almighty Creator, clothed with a humanity like unto ours, and become, for love of us, mortal, passible, subject to time and to all human miseries save sin. Jesus is the only God, Creator of all things, Creator of angels and of men, our first principle and our last end, whose knowledge is true light, whose service is true joy, whose love is the only true happiness.

In Jesus Christ divinity and humanity are united in an indivisible and perfect manner, without being confounded. There is in Him one, and one only Person, which is the Person of God the Son, and for this reason Jesus Christ is eternal, infinite, and almighty, in one word, He is GOD. But at the same time He is man. He was created, He was born, He grew, He suffered, He died as perfectly man as He is perfectly God. In eternity He has a Father, and no mother; in time He has a mother, the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, and no father. He derives from His Father His divine and infinite nature, and from His mother His human and mortal nature. It is through Him we gain access to God His Father, and it is through His mother that we gain access to Him. Jesus is the mysterious bridge which unites in one the Creator and the creature, being Himself both Creator and creature, God and man; and the arch by which this heavenly bridge is united to creation is the most holy Virgin, who gives to Him her own humanity. Jesus Christ is to His creatures just what the head is to the members of the body; the head guides and directs the whole body, communicating life to it; in like manner Jesus communicates to all men, who are His members, divine and eternal life, and the Blessed Virgin is the most pure channel by which all His graces reach us.

You know the touching story of our Divine Master's life on earth. During the three years of His public life He *preached* the gospel, that is to say, He taught to men the

knowledge and love of God His Father, and proved His divinity by many miracles, which His enemies themselves could not deny; He chose, moreover, amongst His numerous disciples, twelve poor fishermen to preach the one true faith throughout the world, thus confounding the pride and vain wisdom of men. Having come into this world to expiate our sins, He took their burden upon Him, and died for us freely and willingly, betrayed by Judas, mocked and scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified between two thieves upon Mount Calvary in Judea; died, with one last divine cry, upon Good Friday, at three o'clock. On Easter Sunday He rose again, by His own power, for our sakes, triumphant over Satan, sin, and death; then He showed Himself during the space of forty days to His apostles, and to many other disciples, who, being at first incredulous, were afterwards obliged to yield before an overwhelming evidence. After giving to them His last supreme instructions, the risen Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives, where He commenced His Passion, and it is He, both God and man, King of the world, and Judge of all men, who will come hereafter to judge us according to our works, and to cast out of His presence, into hell, the devil and all the wicked, and to gather together in a glorious eternity His own most faithful servants.

We shall soon see how we are all united by means of His Church, which is the depository of all the treasures of His love.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST.

A MIRACLE is a visible fact, entirely above and beyond the natural order of things; it is the *unusual* exercise of God's almighty power.

To deny the possibility of miracles is also to deny the power of God, or rather His existence.

Miracles being the seal of divinity, if Jesus Christ were God, He was, in a manner, *bound* to work miracles, *undoubted* miracles, miracles by His own power, bearing the impress of His Godhead; and we have, like the Jews of Capharnaum, a right to ask of Him: What sign dost thou show unto *us that we may* believe?

Jesus Christ does in no way shrink from this trial. His acts speak even more clearly than His words.

The second time that He went up to Jerusalem for the feast of the tabernacles, Jesus, followed by His disciples, met a poor beggar, blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who hath sinned—this man, or his parents, that He should be born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." When He had said these things, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloe." The blind man went therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

But his neighbours would not recognise him. "This is not he," they said, "but a man who is like him." But he said, "I am he." They said therefore to him, "How were thy eyes opened?" He answered, "That man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloe, and wash.' And I went, I washed, and I see." They bring him to the Pharisees, who were met together in the Temple, for it was the Sabbath. The Pharisees were confounded. They questioned the blind man, who told them simply what had passed. "What sayest thou," they asked, "of Him that hath opened thy eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews then did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and had received his sight, until they called his parents, and asked them, saying, "Is this your son who you say was born blind? How then doth he now see?" His parents answered them, and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now seeth, we know not; ask himself."

The Pharisees therefore called the man again, and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." He said therefore to them, "If he be a sinner, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

And as they pressed him with further questions, he answered them, "I have told you already, and you have heard; why would you hear it again? Will you also become His disciples?"

They reviled him therefore, and said, "Be thou His dis-

ciple, but we are the disciples of Moses: as to this man, we know not from whence He is."

The man answered, and said to them, "Why, herein is a wonderful thing, that you know not from whence He is, and He hath opened my eyes. From the beginning of the world, it hath not been heard that any man hath opened the eyes of one born blind. Unless this man were of God, He could not do anything."

They answered, and said to him, "Thou wast wholly born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" and they cast him out of the temple. And Jesus, finding him, said to him, "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus answered, "It is He that talketh with thee." "I believe, Lord," cried the beggar, and falling down, he adored Him.

And it came to pass afterwards that Jesus went into a city that is called Naim; and there went with Him His disciples and a great multitude.

And when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a great multitude of the city was with her. At the sight of the sorrowing mother, Jesus was touched with compassion, and said to her, "Weep not;" and He came near and touched the bier, and they that carried it stood still.

According to the Jewish custom, the dead man had his face uncovered. And Jesus said, "Young man, I say to thee, arise." And immediately he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother.

And there came a fear on them all, and they cried, "A great Prophet is risen up among us; and God hath visited His people." And the rumour of this miracle went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the country round about.

At the end of the first century, one of the immediate disciples of the apostles, by name Quadratus, addressed to the Emperor an apology for Christianity, and cited as irrefragable witnesses of the miracles of Jesus Christ many of those whom the Saviour had thus miraculously healed, or restored to life, and who were still living at the time in which he wrote.

Another of the miracles of Jesus Christ had still more numerous witnesses.

Having withdrawn into Decapolis, not far from the Sea of Galilee, a crowd of people, gathered out of the neighbouring towns, searched for Him three days, and at last discovered Him on a solitary mountain, surrounded by His twelve disciples, and speaking to them of the kingdom of God.

Touched with compassion at the sight of this great multitude, exhausted by hunger and fatigue, Jesus turned to the apostle Philip, and said to him, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Philip answered Him, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one may take a little." Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to Him, "There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are these among so many?" Then Jesus said, "Make the men sit down." And there were about five thousand, not counting women and children. And Jesus took the loaves; raising His eyes to heaven, He blessed and broke, and gave to the apostles, who distributed to the crowd. In like manner also of the fishes, as much as they would.

After the repast, Jesus said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain lest they be lost." And they filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves that remained over and above to them that had eaten.

Just as wheat germinates in the earth, by means of the invisible and creative power of God, and becomes the food of men, so in the sacred hands of that same Creator, when visible in His humanity, bread was multiplied, and became enough for all.

Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said, "This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world."

"The prophet that should come" was no other than the Messiah, who was always thus mentioned by the Jews. Then they all rose in haste, desiring to take Jesus and make Him King; since all the prophecies relating to the Messiah announced that He should be *King of* Israel. But the Saviour, perceiving their intention, withdrew alone to the mountain to pray.

Jesus had commanded His apostles to go down to the *coast of* Bethsaida, to take a ship, and go over the sea

to Capharnaum, where He would Himself rejoin them. But a violent wind soon arose, and at the dawn of day, notwithstanding all their efforts, they had scarcely rowed the space of thirty furlongs, or three leagues. About the fourth hour they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh to the ship. They thought it was a spirit, and gave utterance to their fears. But He, speaking to them immediately, said, "It is I; be not afraid."

Then Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters." And He said, "Come." And Peter, going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the violence of the waves, he was afraid; and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me;" and immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and said to him, "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" And when they were both come up into the boat the wind ceased, and they reached the coast. Seized with astonishment and admiration, the disciples who were in the boat fell at the feet of Jesus, and adored Him, saying, "Indeed Thou art the Son of God."

Thus God remained the Omnipotent Lord of nature, even in the deep humility of His Incarnation; all the *powers* of nature were obedient to Him, and, in the instant cessation of all tumult and confusion at His simple word, we may see a type of that far more serious tumult and confusion caused by sin—a type of that still deeper evil which lies within ourselves, and which our Lord came down from heaven to heal.

We might here relate many touching miracles which the Saviour seemed to sow broadcast upon His pathway, and which form, in their divine completion, the story of the gospels: the sudden cure of the blind man at Jericho, to whom Christ said, "See!" and he saw; that of the poor woman bowed down for eighteen years by frightful suffering, and who, by the simple touch of His garments was immediately healed. To these may be added innumerable manifestations of the divinity and of the tender pity of Jesus.

But amongst all His miracles there is one which is perhaps the most solemn and the most important, and which furnished the Pharisees with a pretext for their last machinations—*the resurrection of Lazarus.*

Lazarus was a sick man much loved by Jesus, and was the brother of Martha and of Mary Magdalen. He lived at Bethania, four leagues from Jerusalem, and had frequently offered hospitality to the Saviour and His apostles. Lazarus fell grievously ill, and when his sisters found that his life was in danger, they sent to Jesus, who was then in Galilee, saying, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Jesus answered, "This sickness is not unto death, but that the Son of God may be glorified by it."

Notwithstanding the love which Jesus bore to Lazarus and his sisters, He still remained in the same place two days; then He said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judea again. Lazarus our friend sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." His disciples therefore said, "Lord, if he sleeps he shall do well." And Jesus answered, "Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe."

Now when Jesus arrived at Bethania, He found that Lazarus had been already four days in the grave. Martha and Mary were both in their house, quite overwhelmed by grief, and their friends and relations were still with them trying to comfort them. Martha, on being told that Jesus was come, rose instantly, and came quickly to meet Him, exclaiming, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And Jesus answered her, "Thy brother shall rise again." "I know," said Martha, "that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he be dead, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die for ever. Believest thou this?" "Yea, Lord," cried the faithful Martha, "I have believed that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into this world." And she left Him to call her sister. And Mary, rising immediately, came quickly to Jesus, and falling at His feet, she echoed her sister's words, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Jesus, therefore, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews that were come with her weeping, was Himself troubled in spirit, and said to them, "Where have you laid him?" They say to Him, "Lord, come and see." And Jesus *wept*. The Jews therefore said, "Behold, how He loved *him!*" But some of them said, "Could not He that

opened the eyes of the man born blind have caused that this man should not die?"

Jesus therefore, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the sepulchre. Now it was a cave, and a stone was laid over it. Jesus saith, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith to Him, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now dead four days." "Did I not say to thee," answered the Saviour, "that if thou believe thou shalt see the glory of God?" And when the stone was taken away, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding bands, and his face was bound about with a napkin. And Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go.

And a great number of the Jews who were present there believed in Jesus Christ, and soon the fact of the resurrection of Lazarus was known throughout Jerusalem and all Judea. And on hearing it, all the enemies of the Lord were seized with rage, and they, with the high priest Caiphas, gathered a council at Jerusalem, and said, "We must resolve on some measures, for this Man works miracles, and we cannot deny it!"

Neither the Jews nor the Pagans of the first centuries ever thought of denying the miracles of Jesus Christ. And they would not have failed to do so if such a denial had been possible, as this would have been the simplest means of striking at the very root of this new belief. But how could they deny facts which were accomplished in the open daylight, within the very walls of Jerusalem, or in the principal towns of Judea, before an immense concourse of people, and even under the eyes of the enemies of the Saviour?

Still, they found it was necessary to explain away these miracles, to which the apostles in their preaching continually appealed. Thus, not being able to deny them, they misrepresented them; sometimes they attributed them to diabolic agency, sometimes to the power of magic, and sometimes to a pretended theft of the incommunicable name of Jehovah, of which Jesus might have possessed Himself in the Temple; all foolish fables which it is useless to confute.

Pride, false *ideas of justice*, selfish interests, and a thousand *other passions* formed a barrier between the Phari-

sees and Jesus Christ; it was to them He spoke the appalling words which the resurrection of Lazarus so forcibly justified: "Neither will ye believe if one rise again from the dead."

We may all learn one great lesson from the incredulity of the Jews. That even *miracles* will not give faith, but that something more is needful—a sincere love of truth, the right spirit in seeking for it, and a pure and lowly heart.

Jesus Christ said that He was God; and to this, the chief proof of His divinity, no answer can be made. He confirmed His words by His miracles; and this second proof is as clear and as unquestionable as the first.

There is no need of lengthy arguments to explain how powerful is the proof afforded by such miracles. Those worked by our Lord are of a special nature, peculiar to Himself alone; He worked them by His own power, and without invoking any power beyond His own.—"I will; be thou healed."—"Young man, I say to thee, arise."—"Lazarus, come forth." Saints and prophets have performed miracles, and *great* miracles, but it has been always in the name of the Lord their God. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," said St. Peter to the lame man, whom he cured when entering the Temple, "rise up and walk."

The apostles, the martyrs, and the saints, from the very origin of Christianity, even down to the present time, have worked and have only been *able* to work miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, and by a power beyond their own.

It is impossible to deny the divine miracles of Jesus; to attempt to do so would show a will more hardened than that of Caiphas and the Pharisees—those clear-sighted and inveterate enemies of the Saviour. Let us hear their testimony, "*This man works miracles, and we cannot deny it.*"

If we will only hold fast, in all integrity of purpose, to that love of truth of which passion had deprived the Jews, we shall draw from the miracles of Jesus the only logical and evident conclusion, and we shall cast ourselves in spirit at His sacred feet, repeating with all the faculties of our nature the words of him who was born blind: *Credo Domine*—"Lord, I believe."

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

After the three years of His public life, the Son of God made man desired to consummate by death—by the death of the cross—the merciful work of our redemption.

By sin we had deserved death; Jesus took this death upon Himself, and in exchange restored eternal life to all sinners who unite themselves to Him by ardent faith and true love, by unquestioning obedience and sincere repentance.

Innocent, and more than innocent, Jesus made satisfaction for the guilty, and His Heavenly Father was willing to accept the substitute provided by His infinite love.

The Son of God and of Mary was now thirty-three and a half years of age. He had taught all things, and had prepared all things needful for the world's salvation. He had chosen His ambassadors and his apostles, the ministers of His mercy, and had formed them Himself in His own school; at their head He had placed Simon Peter as their leader, the vicar of God. Nothing now remained for Him to do, in order to accomplish the prophecies, but to suffer and to die. This infinite suffering, which began at the Last Supper by the sacrilege and treason of the apostle Judas, and was consummated on the cross of Calvary and in the sepulchre, is called the Passion.

The Passion of the Saviour embraces in a fearful and mysterious manner every description of grief—bitterness of heart, darkness of spirit, anguish and sadness, humiliation and thirst, rending and infamy, and nameless outrage, bodily suffering and annihilations—all of which form, in union with death, the just, the most just punishment of our sins, and, at the same time, their superabundant expiation.

Each one of us, even though having little of the Christian, has often read and often meditated on all the details of that dolorous Passion, the three hours' agony in the Garden of Olives, the bloody sweat, the cowardice of the apostles, the kiss of the traitor Judas; the blows, the insults, and the ignominious bonds on the way from Gethsemane to the palace of the high priests Annas and Caiphas; the buffeting of the high priest's servants, and the holy meek-

ness of the divine Victim; the false witnesses, the rage, the imprecations, and the spitting; the blasphemy of Caiphas, and the miserable judges now turned into tormentors; the triple denial of the unhappy St. Peter; the three or four hours of sacrilegious mockery, of blows and infamy in the prison of Caiphas' palace during the night; the definite and solemn condemnation, after Jesus had been dragged a second time before the Sanhedrim, and had once more affirmed that He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God:" the interrogatory of the base Pilate; the raillery of King Herod, philosopher, and wit; the white garment of a fool, and the sceptre of a reed; the silence of Christ when interrogated for the *second* time by Pilate; the bloody scourging of the Roman soldiers; the old scarlet mantle, and the *Ecce Homo;* the *crucifige* of all the Jewish people, and the final condemnation to death; the carrying of the cross; the sorrowful way with its fourteen stations, and lastly, Calvary, where the Divine Lamb, the meek and *sinless Saviour*, was crucified between two thieves, before His mother's eyes, and hung suspended between heaven and earth, as the standard of the world's salvation, until three in the afternoon, when He cried, "It is consummated," and commended His spirit into the hands of His Father!

Jesus crucified! How great a mystery! Nailed upon the cross, yet reigning, even then, within the highest heaven. He, who was able by His single word to work confusion to all His tormentors, to silence for ever the blaspheming and iniquitous judges, His wicked persecutors! He is content to pray and suffer for them, since He is *their* Redeemer as well as ours; and He says to His Heavenly Father, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

On His right hand was crucified with Him a guilty thief; but this sinful man, moved to repentance, believed in Jesus Christ, and, having hope in Him, he turned to Jesus in deep humility and courageous love, and said, "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." And Jesus answered him out of the depths of His divine mercy and infinite compassion, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." . . . This repentant and converted malefactor is a type of all the elect; a sinner, confessing his sins, hoping, imploring, and obtaining mercy, and *expiating his* sins even unto death, by uniting his suffer-

ings to the death of the Son of God;—this robber is the representative of all, who, being sinners, suffer here below, and carry the cross as the just punishment of sin, whilst drawing from the inexhaustible source of the Saviour's love pardon, salvation, and eternal life.

The other thief, the other crucified malefactor, who blasphemed Jesus Christ, believed not, asked no pardon, and died miserably upon his terrible cross;—*he* represents the sinful man who neither believes nor hopes in Jesus, who does not love the God of Calvary, and suffers uselessly on earth because he does not unite his sufferings to those of his Saviour;—this robber is the sinner for whom Jesus suffered and died, yet who refuses to profit by the salvation that is offered to him.

At the foot of the cross stood the Virgin Mary, as stands the priest before the altar, and the victim; there also was St. John, representing the Church, the priesthood, and all faithful disciples; there was St. Mary Magdalen, and other holy women, symbolising both repentant and innocent love.

Let us then, in union with the Blessed Virgin and St. John, with the holy women and the penitent thief, in union with all saints and angels, adore our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, infinitely holy and infinitely beloved! May His cross recall to us incessantly His love, and may His sacred Blood, so freely shed, penetrate to the inmost recesses of our hearts, through a frequent reception of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, in which He dwells, perfect God and perfect Man, thus enabling us to participate in all the merits of His glorious redemption.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

FOURTEEN times during the course of His preaching, Jesus Christ had announced that after His suffering and His death He would rise again on the third day, and He had clearly pointed out His resurrection as the sure sign by which not only His apostles but the faithless Jews should hereafter acknowledge that He was truly the Son of God. "*An evil and adulterous* generation seeketh a sign, and a

sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

This prophecy was so well known to the enemies of Jesus, and they so thoroughly understood its great importance, that their first care, after the descent from the cross, was to watch the Holy Sepulchre, to send soldiers to guard it, and to affix the public seal on the opening to the grave. This vindictive foresight, with the incredulity of the apostles, and especially of Thomas, have all turned to our profit; but still, the resurrection of our Lord being for us the miracle of miracles, the proof beyond all proofs, it is of extreme importance that we should thoroughly know the details, and should rest our belief upon the evidence.

Divine Providence has, as it were, provided for this by surrounding the resurrection of the Saviour with circumstances so clear and concise as to strike conviction to the heart of any reasonable man.

After the death of Jesus, St. Peter and St. John had rejoined Mary, and had retired with her to weep and pray.

St. John himself acknowledges in his Gospel that they had all forgotten the prophetic words of the Saviour touching the resurrection. The Blessed Virgin alone, being initiated into the mysteries of Christ, knew what would happen, but hid this knowledge in her heart.

As to the apostles, they had all dispersed on the Friday evening, after the treason of Judas in the Garden of Olives; they had passed the Sabbath day and the day of the Passover in the deepest dejection, under the influence of one prevailing sentiment—fear of the Jews. It appears, however, that they all assembled during the night that preceded the resurrection. Thomas Didymus, seized with a sudden panic, had fled far away. Ever since the Friday evening the chief priests had sent constant relays of soldiers to guard the Saviour's tomb; this fact was not known to the holy women, who, having returned to Jerusalem, were not able to go out on the Sabbath day.

At the very moment in which day began to break, the Holy Sepulchre was suddenly shaken, and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven; and his countenance was as

lightning, and his raiment as snow, and for fear of him the guards were struck with terror, and became as dead men; the sealed door was broken open, the stone was rolled back—the Lord had risen! . . . Thus He fulfilled the word that He had spoken, "I lay down My life that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father."

When the guards had recovered from their fright, they fled to the town, and went to relate to Caiphas and the high priests all that had just passed; but they, persistent in their unbelief and hardened by hatred, gave to the soldiers a considerable sum of money that they might spread abroad a report that, during the night, profiting by their sleep, the disciples had come, and had taken away the body of their crucified Master. This foolish story has nothing to support it. The apostles were afterwards able, at Jerusalem, and even in the Temple, openly to expose this palpable lie, told by the Saviour's enemies.

Mary Magdalen, the converted sinner, the faithful and courageous Christian of Calvary, went out from Jerusalem on the Sunday morning before sunrise to weep at the grave of her dead Lord and Master. When Magdalen reached the little garden, which, according to Jewish custom, surrounded the sepulchre, she saw with bewilderment that the door was open, and the stone rolled back. . . . The grave was empty. She ran immediately to tell Peter and John, who hastened to the grave, Magdalen following them.

The Blessed Virgin was alone in her dwelling when, according to tradition, her beloved Son appeared first to her, as to the most worthy of all creatures.

St. John, being the younger, arrived the first, but did not venture to go in before St. Peter, whom Jesus had already designated as the head of the Church. Peter then went down the few steps which led into the sepulchre, and assured himself of the truth. The napkin was still there, and the linen clothes that had been about the head of the Son of God were folded, and lying apart.

The two apostles were much troubled, and returned in haste to tell the other disciples what had happened. But Mary *Magdalen remained* there still when they were gone,

and kneeling near the sepulchre, gave way to tears; but, after a little time, she drew near once more to the entrance of the tomb, and looking in, she now perceived, on each side of the stone where the body of Jesus had been laid, two angels under the form of two young men clothed in white. "Woman," said they to her, "why weepest thou?" "I weep," she answered, "because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

And as she spoke, she caught a glimpse of the figure of a man standing a little behind her, and, thinking it must be the gardener who had care of the garden graves, poor Magdalen spoke to him, weeping, "If thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him." But at the sound of His well-known voice, calling her by her name, *Maru*, she trembled, and looked up; and lifting her eyes to His face, she knew her Lord and Master, and fell prostrate at His feet, in that first moment of her joy.

Jesus said to her, "Do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and to your God." . . .

A little time after this, three other holy women, Joanna, Mary the mother of St. James, and Salome, came to the sepulchre, bringing sweet spices, that they might finish the work of love they had commenced on the evening of Good Friday. Ignorant of what had passed, they were much troubled as to how they should be able to gain entrance to the tomb because of the heavy stone which they had seen placed before it.

As they drew near they perceived, with no less astonishment than Magdalen, that the door was open and the stone lying near; and as they were afraid, an angel, sitting on the right side of the sepulchre, reassured them by these consoling words: "Fear not. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; He is risen; He is not here. Why seek you the living with the dead? Remember how He spoke unto you, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you unto Galilee."

Then, remembering this prophecy, and full of holy awe, they turned and fled in silence. But, behold, even upon

the road, they perceived their Divine Master, who met them, saying, "All Hail!" And falling down before Him, and clinging to His feet, according to the Eastern custom, they adored Him. And Jesus said, "Fear not. Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee;—there shall they see Me." And He vanished out of their sight.

The apostles and the disciples, to whom Magdalen and the holy women related all that had passed, refused to believe their words.

In the afternoon, on the day of the Resurrection, two disciples were going to a town named Emmaus, and were talking together on the coming of the Messiah, when Jesus, changed in appearance, drew near to them, and asked the subject of their conversation. "We are looking for our Master," they said, "the Salvation of Israel; but, behold, to-day is the third day, and nothing has happened." Then the Saviour answered, "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all the things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?"

Then the Divine Traveller revealed to His companions the mystery of the Scriptures, proving to them how clearly they pointed to Himself.

On reaching Emmaus, they entreated Him to stay with them and to partake of their repast; and Jesus, having taken the bread, blessed it, as on the night of the Last Supper, broke it, changed it into His own adorable Body, and gave communion to His two disciples. And immediately their eyes were opened, and they knew the Lord; but He vanished out of their sight.

And as they returned to Jerusalem, they said one to the other, "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke to us on the way?"

The risen Jesus still desired by two clear and distinct manifestations of Himself to triumph completely over the incredulity of the apostles, and the still more obstinate unbelief of Thomas.

One day when the disciples were gathered together, the doors being closed, He appeared, standing in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace be to you; it is I. Fear not." And He showed them His hands and His feet, where the stigmas of the redemption still remained. "Handle and see," added He, "*that it is* I Myself; for a spirit hath not

flesh and bones. Have you here anything to eat?" and when they had offered Him a broiled fish and a honeycomb, He ate before them, distributing amongst them the rest. And at last the apostles, thoroughly convinced, fell down before the Son of God, and adored Him, but even then He reproached them that they had been so slow to believe, saying to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day, and that penance and the remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." Then He breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." How beautiful the harmony between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of sinful humanity, since it was even upon Easter Day that our God and Saviour instituted confession, and thus triumphed over the spiritual death of sin, by giving to all men the means of a spiritual resurrection.

Thomas, now returned to Jerusalem, was the only one who refused to believe so many witnesses. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails," he said, "and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." Therefore, the eighth day after Easter, the apostles, and this time Thomas with them, being gathered together in the upper chamber for prayer, and the doors being closed, Jesus stood suddenly in the midst of them, and turning to Thomas, He said, "Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing." The apostle, now convinced, fell on his knees, exclaiming, in faith and repentance, "My Lord and my God!" Then, in tones of reproof, Jesus answered him, "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."

This, then, is the last link in the chain of evidence which attests the resurrection of our Lord, and it was, as St. Gregory remarks, for the confirmation of our faith that God permitted such marvellous unbelief. Could those who might refuse to believe the apostles *possibly* refuse to accept *the testimony* of St. Thomas? Therefore Jesus Christ, the

Son of God made man, died upon the cross to expiate our sins, and truly rose from the dead by His own power; therefore the Christian faith is divine and absolutely certain; therefore the Catholic Church, which brings to us this faith, is the mother of our souls, and the harbour of salvation.

Let us have more faith than Thomas; let us believe, without seeing, the truth affirmed by the Gospel, by the holy apostles and martyrs; let us believe, love, and adore our risen Lord. "He who believes shall be saved; he who believes not shall be condemned."

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

FORTY days after Easter our Lord appeared for the last time to His disciples, near to Jerusalem. The eleven apostles, and more than five hundred disciples, were present. It was noonday when He appeared to them, and He led them to the Mount of Olives, and to a place of which the exact spot is still preserved in the tradition of the holy places.

"Behold," He said, "I send the promise of My Father upon you, and you shall be endued with power from on high." Then lifting up His hands to bless them, He added, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature; and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

And even as our divine Lord was speaking to His apostles this last solemn farewell, He rose in unspeakable majesty above all the prostrate crowd, and soon a bright cloud received Him out of their sight.

Since then, the glorified body of Jesus Christ has been in a supernatural and ineffable condition, of which nothing on earth could give us any idea. Although having a body *truly human, He is invisible* to our earthly eyes; our hands

cannot touch Him, our senses cannot attain to Him. He deigns, in His great love, still to dwell amongst us by means of the most holy Sacrament of the altar, where He is truly present, though veiled under the appearances of bread and wine.

Jesus waits for us in heaven; and those who serve Him faithfully, who hate sin, obey the Church, and frequent the Sacraments, have a sure and certain hope of meeting their Lord in heaven when their earthly pilgrimage is done. His glorious Ascension is the pledge of our own entrance into paradise. It is the last and most wonderful of those miracles by which He deigned to confirm our faith and to render us absolutely certain of the divine nature of the Christian religion. This Ascension, at the full noonday, in the clear daylight, in the presence of more than five hundred witnesses, is a fact that it is simply folly to deny. Those who incredulously reject it are forced to do violence to the most elementary rules of logic, of reason, and of good sense. Catholics rest their faith upon decisive reasons and upon the evidence of indisputable demonstrations, whilst the sceptical are reduced to an irrational denial of what they cannot possibly disprove; and, failing arguments, will invariably take refuge in senseless ridicule, angry invective, or pointless satire, which does but prove them conscious of the *weakness* of their cause, and of the instability of the ground on which they stand. Thanks be to God who has founded our faith and all our hopes upon no metaphysical reasoning, but upon simple facts which are open to the whole world—clear, unquestionable facts, of which the immediate and necessary consequence is the divinity of Jesus Christ, the infallibility of His Church, and the necessity for all men who desire to be saved to believe in God, in Jesus Christ, the true and living God, to obey the Pope and the bishops, and to practise religion just as it is taught them by the Pope and the bishops in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the name of our Heavenly Father. Nothing could be more reasonable and provable than the Catholic faith, which rests upon the truth as upon an immovable rock. Let us guard it carefully in the midst of a world which blasphemes the faith it knows not. Let us guard it carefully from a danger greater still—from the contagious influence of careless, inconsistent Christians, who have not the constancy to remain faithful to the holy engagements of their baptism.

PENTECOST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

BEFORE ascending into heaven, the Word Incarnate had promised to St. Peter and the apostles that He would send to them the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of justice, and of love, to become the Soul of the Church.

He had, moreover, commanded them to wait at Jerusalem, in retreat and prayer, this miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost. In obedience to this, and in expectation of the fulfilment of this promise, St. Peter and the apostles, with seventy-two disciples and the holy women, had withdrawn to the upper chamber, and there, grouped around the Blessed Virgin, mother and queen of the budding Church, they persevered in fasting and in prayer.

Thus nine days passed away. The tenth was the fiftieth after Easter, and was also the anniversary of the promulgation of the Decalogue by the Lord in the midst of the thunders of Mount Sinai. On this tenth day, at about nine in the morning, the whole house trembled, and the room in which the apostles and the Blessed Virgin were assembled was filled with a supernatural flame—a symbol of the Holy Spirit, of whom Mary was the living temple.

It descended upon each of the apostles under the form of tongues of fire, penetrating and completely transforming them. At that moment they received both the plenitude of heavenly gifts, and the fulfilment of all the promises of the Saviour; the Catholic Church received its confirmation and its divine mission; and it was then, according to the most ancient traditions, that St. Peter, the first Pope, surrounded by all his brethren, celebrated for the first time the divine sacrifice of the Mass.

Now all this was noised abroad throughout Jerusalem, and many thousands of Jews came in haste to Mount Sion. St. Peter, seeing this multitude, had pity on them, and going out with the apostles, he began to preach to them the resurrection and divinity of Jesus Christ. And all the apostles joined in glorifying the loving-kindness of the Saviour. *Then it was that* God worked a great miracle—

the apostles preached in one language only, and there were present there men out of every nation under heaven, who were quite unable to understand Hebrew, and yet all understood the apostles, and every man believed that he heard them speak in his own tongue. By this God desired to teach that His apostles were helped by Him, and also that the Church is the universal society of all people, and that, by means of the Church, all are united in the same faith, in the same truth, and in love for the same Lord.

Seeing this great wonder which none could deny, almost all present unhesitatingly adored the God of St. Peter and the apostles, and they cried, "What shall we do?"

Then St. Peter instructed them briefly in the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, prepared them for baptism, and, assisted by his brethren, he that day baptized nearly five thousand. The following Sunday three thousand more became Christians. This was the nucleus of that great and imperishable Catholic Society, which, from that time, has gradually extended over the whole world, teaching all the great nations of the earth to acknowledge Jesus as their King, and inculcating the lessons of holiness and peace, of devotion and charity, of purity of morals, and human respect; teaching, in one word, all that is great and true and noble upon earth.

The Holy Spirit is, I repeat, the soul of the Church. It is He who animates, sustains, and protects it, who gives it life, and makes it fruitful in all good works; it is He who brings destruction upon its enemies; it is He who maintains in the true faith, and constantly assists the Pope, its infallible head.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, and dwells in all fulness in the Sacred Heart of the Saviour as in a home of life and love. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son as from the Father, and reaches the faithful only through the divine channel of the Heart of Jesus.

Our Lord, the invisible Head and Ruler of His Church, works only through the Holy Spirit whom He sheds as a heavenly dew upon the souls of the faithful.

Thus it is the Holy Spirit who gives to the Sacraments all their virtue, to the Pope his infallibility, and to bishops and priests their sacred prerogatives.

It is the Holy Spirit who governs and directs the Church, *sanctifies the* saints, and strengthens the martyrs. It is the

Holy Spirit who makes fruitful all Catholic institutions, and inspires all noble deeds.

Nothing exists, and nothing can exist, without the working of the Holy Spirit, since He is, with the Father and the Son, the only true and living God, Creator, and Lord of all things.

Fallen angels and sinful men drive Him from their hearts, where, with the Father and the Son, He ever desires to dwell. But the faithful children of God and of the Church guard themselves carefully as the temples of the Holy Ghost, knowing well that the indwelling spirit of their God is the most priceless possession, the source of all grace, and the germ of eternal happiness and glory.

Every year, fifty days after Easter, the Church, in remembrance of the Holy Ghost, solemnly celebrates the beautiful feast of Pentecost, which is, next to Easter and Christmas, the greatest of the year.

THE GOSPEL.

MANY speak of the *Gospel* without having any knowledge of it. Many have never read it; and some would even be troubled to explain clearly what it is.

Hence it follows that, on the subject of religion and Christianity, people believe just what they have been educated to believe; thus, in our days, as in the time of Luther and of Calvin, we may see thousands of unhappily misguided people who, deluded by false teachers, hate their brethren, and blaspheme the most sacred things, all in the name of the Gospel!

The Gospel is a book; it is the abridged history of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This sacred history was written by four eye-witnesses, or contemporaries of Jesus Christ. They wrote what they had seen with their own eyes, and had heard with their own ears. Two of them were amongst the number of the twelve apostles; these were St. Matthew and St. John. The two others, St. Luke and St. Mark, were only companions and disciples of the apostles, and wrote from their dictation.

There are then, properly speaking, *four gospels*, or histories of Jesus Christ. But they have all been written for one end—to teach men to know, love, and adore the Saviour, and therefore they are all united in one single volume called the *Gospel*, which means *good news*—news of salvation.

These four books were all inspired by the Holy Spirit, and written under His guidance. They relate the actions and the most important words of Jesus Christ. Each Gospel explains and develops another; the one is the supplement or completion of the other.

The first Gospel which was written is that of St. Matthew. It is called for this reason the *Gospel according to St. Matthew.* It was written at Jerusalem, about fifteen years after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

During those fifteen years, the apostles, under the direction of St. Peter, the vicar of Jesus Christ, and their supreme head, had preached the doctrines of their Divine Master; they had made Him known to the world; they had related His miracles and repeated His sacred words; but they had *written* nothing. It was their teaching, and their teaching only, which had been for fifteen years the Christian's rule of faith. "Go," the Lord had said to them, "go, teach all nations; preach the Gospel to every creature; teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. He that heareth you, heareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me."

The ministry of the apostles was therefore the ministry of speech. They preached and administered the sacraments; they baptized, they heard confessions, they confirmed, they ordained deacons, priests, and bishops, celebrated every day the sacrifice of the Eucharist, gave Holy Communion to the faithful, and extreme unction to the sick.

But the time came when it was necessary for them to disperse throughout the world to conquer the whole universe for God.

Before they separated, the apostles, moved by the entreaties of the converted Jews of Jerusalem, charged the Apostle St. Matthew to leave them in writing the principal teachings and most remarkable events of the Saviour's life, which this same apostle had so often preached to them. *This written* history was to be for their consolation, and

that they might hold it in still more faithful remembrance. St. Matthew wrote, therefore, the first history of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of St. Matthew is written in Hebrew or Syriac, which was the common language of the Jews at that time. His principal endeavour was to prove, by the deeds and words of Jesus Christ, that He was the Messiah, the Redeemer expected by the Jews, the Son of God made man, and that He had in Himself fulfilled all the prophecies relating to the Messiah; that He had truly risen from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures, and had ascended into heaven, that where He is we might be also.

St. Mark, who wrote the second Gospel, was not one of the twelve apostles, but he was the disciple of the prince of the apostles, St. Peter, his secretary and companion in his apostolic career. He followed him to Rome, and it was there that he wrote his Gospel, thus transmitting to writing, for the consolation of the faithful at Rome, an abridgment of all that his master, St. Peter, had preached to them.

This history of Jesus Christ, equally inspired by the Holy Spirit, was approved by the prince of the apostles, and was circulated from thence throughout the Christian Church. It was written in Latin, the common language of the Romans at that time.

St. Mark was made a bishop by St. Peter. He evangelised Egypt and the north of Africa, and died a martyr.

St. Luke, the third historian of Jesus Christ, was a Greek. He was a physician and a painter. He was the friend and faithful companion of the great apostle St. Paul, who had been taught, by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ, all the mysteries of Christianity. St. Luke wrote in Greek what St. Paul was preaching in Greece and Asia. His principal object was to rectify several facts, and much that was most important in the teaching of Jesus Christ which had been altered by ignorant or ill-intentioned men; for even in the time of the apostles there were heretics—that is to say, people who would alter the Christian religion. It is for this reason, St. Luke himself says, that he begins from the very origin of Christianity. He speaks of the great forerunner of the Messiah, St. John the Baptist; he relates all the details of the Incarnation of the Son of God in the

womb of Mary; he gives a clear account of the Annunciation of the angel to Mary at Nazareth; of the Holy Nativity at Bethlehem, and of the earliest incidents of the Saviour's life. He consulted the apostles and the disciples, and probably the Blessed Virgin herself, as he preached with St. Paul at Ephesus and at Jerusalem, where Mary was as the mother and counsellor of the budding Church.

St. Luke wrote, equally with St. Matthew and St. Mark, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who preserved the historians of Jesus Christ from all possibility of error.

And lastly, the fourth Gospel was written by the apostle St. John, the much-loved disciple of Jesus Christ, who alone, of all the apostles, saw Jesus die upon the cross, who was given by Jesus when dying to Mary, to fill His vacant place, and to watch over her.

An interval of nearly fifty years separates the three first Gospels from that of St. John. The apostle was in Asia, at Ephesus, and was nearly a hundred years old. New and more vigorous heresies sprung up as the apostles, one after another, died. St. John alone was living. It was in vain that the early Christians pointed out to these heretics how utterly their new doctrines were opposed to the teaching of the apostles, recorded in the three Gospels, and preached by the bishops, their legitimate successors. These daring innovators did *then* exactly what Protestant theologians, face to face with the Church, do *now;* they distorted the *meaning* of the sacred words which were cited in opposition to them, and clung obstinately to their errors.

Then the faithful had recourse to the aged apostle, who, when he had communed with God, commanded fasting and public prayer throughout the Church, in order to obtain the illumination of the Holy Spirit; then, after a long ecstasy, during which God revealed to him heavenly secrets, he wrote the first words of his Gospel—words that seemed drawn from the very bosom of the Eternal.

The Gospel of St. John was written in Greek, which was the language then spoken at Ephesus. It was, like the three earlier Gospels, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and breathed still more of the spirit of Divine love.

St. John dwells most emphatically on the words and miracles of Jesus Christ, which clearly prove the divinity *of the* Word, and His perfect equality with the Father and *the Holy* Ghost.

Such are the four authors of the *history* of Jesus Christ, which is the greatest, most sacred, and most authentic of all histories.

The Gospel is, with the Holy Eucharist, the most precious treasure of the Church. It is the manual of the faithful, the mirror of their lives, and the model which they should incessantly follow.

Let us never read those holy pages but with faith, reverence, and love; and with an earnest desire to become holier each day by conforming our lives more nearly to the life of Jesus Christ, our Divine Master, and our great Example.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THE word *Assumption* means *lifting up to heaven, carrying away from earth to heaven.* The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is the mystery of the happy death of the Mother of God, of her miraculous resurrection, and her assumption into heaven, where, being invested with the glory of her Divine Son, she reigns for ever, queen of heaven and earth.

A poor and lowly virgin, Mary was born at Nazareth, four thousand years after the fall of Eve, and about fifteen years before the Incarnation of the Saviour. She lived at first in the Temple at Jerusalem with holy women consecrated to God. Her life was passed in prayer, in work, and in innocence. Espoused to St. Joseph, her relation, and the descendant, like herself, of David, Abraham, and Noah, she and her betrothed husband both lived in perfect continence; both had taken a vow of perpetual virginity.

We have already related how the angel Gabriel appeared to her at Nazareth. In a poor stable at Bethlehem, she brought into the world Jesus, her Son and her God.

She passed thirty years with Jesus and St. Joseph in prayer and poverty and daily work. The model of interior souls, Mary made no outward show; all her life, all her glory was hidden in Jesus Christ. She passed her days and nights in closest communion with Him; she listened to Him, she talked with Him, but, more than all, she loved Him. She followed Him during His three years of teaching, and she was with Him through all the phases of His dolorous Passion, even unto Calvary, where she received His last sigh.

Before His death, Jesus bequeathed her to St. John, His much-loved apostle, as His dearest possession and most sacred heritage. "Behold thy mother," He said to St. John, and turned His dying eyes to Mary.

All true Christians, being themselves the well-beloved disciples of Jesus, were represented on Mount Calvary by St. John; and at that supreme moment they received the Blessed Virgin for their mother; and Mary loves them all as her adopted children, by reason of the love she bears to Jesus, who dwells within them.

Mary was the first, according to the Fathers, to whom the risen Jesus appeared. She followed Him to the Mount of Olives, where she watched Him ascend into heaven. Then she retired with the apostles to the upper chamber at Jerusalem, and ten days after the Holy Spirit, who already dwelt in all fulness in Mary, as in His most pure sanctuary, was poured forth with the splendour of the Divine Majesty upon the first Pastors of the Church, to bestow on them all graces needful for their apostolic mission.

Thus Mary assisted, as queen and mother, in the foundation of the Church, in the first preaching of the prince of the apostles, and in the first efforts made by the zealous disciples of her Son.

She followed St. John, her adopted son, to Ephesus, then returned with him to Jerusalem; and there, at the age of sixty-three, or some say of seventy-three years, the Virgin Mary, surrounded by apostles whom the Divine Providence had gathered together at Jerusalem, fell asleep in Jesus on August 15th, in the forty-eighth (or fifty-eighth) year of the Christian era.

Being the holiest of creatures, her soul entered immediately into the glory of heaven. Her sacred body was buried and laid in the sepulchre by St. Peter and the other apostles with the most tender reverence and sorrow. They kept her raiment, and, amongst other things, her veil, of which many churches still possess some fragments, and of which a considerable portion is said to be at the Church of Chartres in France.

There is a sacred tradition that God had permitted the apostle St. Thomas to be absent at the death of Mary, in order that her glory might be more clearly manifested. Warned of this great event by a divine inspiration, St. Thomas hastened to Jerusalem, but he arrived too late; for

three days her sacred body had rested in the grave. Deeply grieved, St. Thomas earnestly requested to be allowed to look once more upon the much-loved face of the mother of his Saviour. The apostles yielded to his prayers, and then, accompanied by a large gathering of the Christians of Jerusalem, they all went together to the sepulchre, singing hymns and psalms. They opened the tomb; but what were the surprise, admiration, and holy rejoicing of all present, when, instead of the body of Mary, they saw the linen clothes reverently folded, and the grave filled with flowers!

However this may be, the constant tradition of the Church teaches that the angels had been sent by Jesus to raise from the dead, and bear to heaven the mortal remains of that most Holy Virgin who had become their queen by the glory of her divine maternity. For even as the mother of a king is infinitely above his servants, so Mary, the Mother of God, is infinitely above all saints and angels and archangels—above all the cherubims and seraphims of heaven. Immediately beneath Jesus Christ, she reigns with Him, and by Him, over all His creatures.

The Assumption is the crowning glory of the Mother of God. Christians celebrate it by a solemn festival. It is a day of joy, for it is the day on which the queen of Christians died, and death to the Christian is not the gloomy end of all things, but the happy deliverance from the sorrows of life, the joyful entrance into the unutterable gladness, which on earth they could only hope for and desire. It is the day on which Mary triumphed over death; it is the day on which our Mother was eternally crowned. Happy shall we be if we are the true children of this most holy Mother; happy, if by a faithful following of Jesus Christ, we deserve that she should regard us as her children.

Let us ask her to bless us, to obtain for us a happy death, and to conduct us, after the sorrows of life, to that blessed country where she reigns with Jesus Christ throughout eternal ages.

THE CHURCH.

God is known to us through Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is known to us through the Church. The Church leads us to the Son of God our Saviour, and He leads us to God His Father. Without Jesus Christ there is no true God; without the Church there is no true Christianity.

By the term *Church* three distinct things may be understood, although these three are all expressed in the one word.

I. The great society of all reasonable creatures who know the one true God, and are in close relations with Him by means of religion, whether in heaven, on earth, or in purgatory. In this sense we are all members of the Church.

II. The government established by Jesus Christ to preserve His children in true faith, unity, peace, and holiness; in this sense the Church signifies the Pope and the bishops, assisted by such coadjutors as they themselves provide.

III. The material Temple, where the members of the Church meet upon certain days, under the direction of their legitimate pastors, to honour God by public worship, and to receive religious instruction. But we are not now speaking of the Church from this third point of view.

The Church is then a great society, the family of God upon earth. The Father of this great and holy family is in heaven, and is God Himself, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by making Himself our Brother, has changed us from *servants* of God into His *children.*

Our Mother is the Blessed Virgin Mary; the Mother of Jesus our elder Brother.

Our Heavenly Father and our Brother, and also Mary our Mother, await us in our true home in heaven. The Church is therefore the society of peace, unity, and happiness, both in time and in eternity.

To guide us safely in the path of happiness, Jesus Christ has given us in this world a visible father, to whom He has entrusted all the treasures of His mercy and His power. This father is the Pope, successor of St. Peter, vicar of Jesus Christ, pastor of the Christian people, doctor of the true faith, sovereign Pontiff, and bond of unity for all the *faithful.*

"*Thou art Peter*," said the Son of God to the first Pope, "and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven."

There is, consequently, only one true Church, established by Jesus Christ Himself—divine and imperishable—and this is the Church built upon St. Peter and his successors, the Catholic or universal Church, of which St. Peter and his successors are pastors and pontiffs, and whose centre is Rome, the city of St. Peter. There is only one Pope on earth, as there is only one Christ, as there is only one God, and only those who are obedient to him may feel assured that they belong to the great family of God.

In the pastoral charge of the Pope, Jesus Christ has associated bishops just as He formerly associated the apostles with St. Peter. When our bishops are Catholic—that is to say, united to the Pope by faith and obedience, we are as clearly bound to obey them as we are bound to obey the Pope and Jesus Christ Himself, since they are to us the representatives of God.

Beneath the Bishops, and subject to their direction, are the priests, who aid them in their holy ministry, and join in the great work of the salvation of souls, by preaching to the faithful the word of God, administering to them the sacraments, and celebrating in their midst the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and other offices of public worship.

Such is the Church—the great and holy family of God, the ark of salvation, the peaceful and invincible army which wages warfare with the powers of hell, and marches on through all the centuries—ever on, to the conquest of paradise.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

It is most needful to insist upon one great and fundamental truth, viz., the divinity of the *Catholic Church*. This is the name given to the great society of *Christians*, or disciples of Jesus Christ.

We have already seen that the only true religion is the Christian religion, so called because Jesus Christ is its Head, its Master, and its God.

During His life on earth, Jesus Christ chose twelve disciples, whom He called *apostles*, which means simply *envoys*, and He appointed one amongst them, the apostle St. Peter, to be their head, when He should Himself have left the earth. Hence it was to the apostles, and especially to St. Peter, their supreme head, that He entrusted the care of religion. He invested them with His spiritual authority, commanded them to preach the Christian faith throughout the world, and to bring all men under His dominion; and He promised to them, and to their successors, His perpetual assistance even unto the end of the world.

In fulfilment of this promise, ten days after His ascension into heaven, He sent to them His Holy Spirit to remain with them and their successors throughout all ages; the Spirit of TRUTH, who preserves the pastors of the Christian people from all error in the teaching of the Faith; the Spirit of Holiness, who gives to them the means of becoming holy themselves, and of making all men holy, if obedient to their voice; the Spirit of wisdom and power, who preserves the work of Jesus Christ, and makes His Church triumphant over all the powers of earth and hell.

St. Peter and the apostles, obedient to the command of Jesus Christ, dispersed over all the world, preaching the true religion. All died martyrs; they were the first Catholic bishops, and in every country where they preached they consecrated bishops and priests, of whom Catholic bishops and priests are alone the actual successors.

St. Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, at which city he was crucified, during the first persecution of the Christians, in the reign of the Emperor Nero. The Bishop of Rome is the successor of St. Peter, and the inheritor of the glorious promises of Jesus Christ. He is called the POPE, which means the *Father* of Christians.

The Pope is the Head of the Christian religion. Those who separate themselves from him must separate themselves at the same time from Jesus Christ. When he commands, it is Jesus Christ who commands; when he forbids and condemns, it is Jesus Christ who forbids and condemns.

It is the Pope alone who is the centre of unity for all the

faithful; it is by means of *his* authority alone that their vast numbers form *one* only flock, *one* only family, *one* only Church! Further, there is but *one* true Church of Jesus Christ, and that is the Church which is governed by the Pope.

If any desire to know if they profess the one true faith, they have simply to ask themselves, if they own as their Head and their spiritual Father, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Catholic Church. For our Saviour desired to give to all a clear and simple test, by means of which they might have no doubt about the true religion.

Jesus Christ founded a Church, for He said *My* Church. And He founded only *one* Church, for He said My *Church*, and not My *Churches*.

And this one true Church of Jesus Christ, what is it? It is the Church which is founded on St. Peter and governed by St. Peter; it is the Catholic and Roman Church, of which the Pope, successor of St. Peter, is the head, the pastor, and the centre of unity. It is, therefore, only the Pope and the Catholic bishops to whom we must have recourse when we desire to learn all points of Christian doctrine. They alone have received from Jesus Christ power, and a divine mission to mankind. They alone are able, by the perpetual assistance of the Holy Ghost, to preserve the Christian doctrine pure and intact from error. All other men who intermeddle with religious teaching are nothing but intruders and sacrilegious usurpers. Such are all schismatic bishops and priests, and such the whole body of the Protestant clergy.

Priests themselves cannot preach the Christian faith except when they are sent by the bishops.

The Catholic Church is therefore composed of all Christians who are under the guidance of the Pope and the bishops, who profess the true religion, and, possessing it in all its purity, know and practise the law of God, and march on to the conquest of paradise, where their risen and glorified Saviour awaits them. "No one can have God for his Father who is not willing to have the Church for his mother"—the words of St. Cyprian, bishop and martyr, sixteen hundred years ago.

Let us then reverence the priests of the Church as the ambassadors of God; let us be ever ready to contemn the

attacks directed against them by irreligious men; let us listen to their voice, and be obedient to their teaching; such was the command of Jesus Christ, "Go," said their Divine Master to them, "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.

ORGANISATION OF THE CHURCH.

THERE is on earth a great army which attacks no one, which wounds no one, which kills no one, and yet it fights incessantly, and has marched unshaken during nineteen centuries against the same enemy, through the same perils, on to the same conquest. It is everywhere, yet few people recognise its presence. It is a thousand times more numerous than the armies of the most powerful emperors, and it numbers more heroes in its ranks. It fights against far more fearful foes, and the cross of honour with which it rewards its bravest men is of immeasurably greater value than the decoration of the battlefield.

This army is the Catholic Church. Its great Leader and Commander, already crowned with glory, is Jesus Christ who reigns in heaven. But its divine Leader has entrusted the entire command of his army upon earth to one man, who commands all the rest, and leads them on to victory. This is the Pope, successor of St. Peter, to whom the Son of God declared, that upon him the Church should be established, and that the gates of hell should never prevail against it. God Himself has organised this great army, of which all Catholics form a part. And to those who are faithful to their standard the reward is nothing less than the happiness and the eternal rest of heaven. Nothing is more *strange* than the ignorance of many with regard to a subject which so closely concerns them. A Christian may not be ignorant of such things, any more than a soldier may be ignorant of the different grades of general, colonel, captain, sergeant, and soldier, in the hierarchy of the army.

Our leader to whom we all, without exception, owe *obedience*, is the Pope. This cannot be too often repeated,

or too strongly enforced. His spiritual power extends over the whole world. No one is excepted from the great rule of obedience; and cardinals, bishops, and priests are only distinguished from the whole body of the faithful in their relations with regard to the Pope, by rendering him a more unquestioning submission and a deeper homage.

Such is the express will of the Son of God. Whoever separates himself from the Pope does, at the same time, separate himself from Jesus Christ.

Just as a general who is charged with the care of the whole army can only fulfil his duties when helped by other officers who, under his orders, command the different regiments of the army, even so the Pope is helped in his supreme charge by the bishops who, under his direction, watch over the different divisions of the Church. Each one of these divisions is called a *diocese*, and takes the name of the town in which the bishop resides; and these different dioceses, in their perfect union, form the Catholic Church.

Priests are the auxiliaries of the bishop, who, in his turn, confides to them different portions of the flock which he is bound to govern, teach, and sanctify. Thus each diocese is divided into many parishes, and the priest intrusted by the bishop with any division of the diocese is called the parish priest. All priests are not parish priests. Those who have not the charge of a parish are either assistant priests or are simply priests living beyond the limits of parochial administration, and exclusively occupied in study, prayer, and teaching the young, in giving missions, in hearing confessions, and in preaching the Word of God, thus exercising, under the close direction of the bishops, all the good works which have for their end the salvation of souls.

Bishops and priests have been, equally with the Pope, ordained by our Saviour. He it is who has regulated their respective relations, and who has established that great and indissoluble bond of union which may be summed up in one word—obedience. The priest is bound to obey the bishop, as the bishop is bound to obey the Pope.

Just as in the army, the general in command has a staff of officers, who convey his orders to all *inferior* officers, so in the Church the Pope has about him an *ecclesiastical* staff composed of cardinals and Roman prelates, by whose help he governs the Church in all its details; for this reason, cardinals are *above all the* bishops and archbishops in the

world. The cardinalate is as the radiation of the Papacy. A cardinal is the intimate adviser of the sovereign pontiff, and thus participates in his supreme power. It is to the cardinals that the Pope confides the examination and direction of all that relates to the general government of the Church; and thus they form around him an august senate always ready to assist with advice and most zealous support.

The Pope is always dressed in white; cardinals in red, which is called the Roman purple; archbishops, bishops, and other prelates in violet. All other ecclesiastics wear black.

These different degrees of the sacred authority of the Church should be ever regarded with the greatest respect. Whatever happens, and in spite of the plausible tone assumed by infidel writers, and in mischievous journals, all reasonable men should render a glad and ready obedience to the voice of the Pope, the bishop, and the priest; such obedience is ennobled by the fact that it is rendered unto Jesus Christ Himself, since the priests of His Church were fully invested with His sacred authority by the might of His own infallible words.

THE POPE.

THE first Pope, the first vicar of Jesus Christ, was the apostle St. Peter.

Who cannot recall the memorable passages of the Gospel in which Jesus Christ first promised, and afterwards conferred upon him the sovereignty of the universe? Our Lord was in Judea, in the country bordering upon the town of Cesarea. To try the faith of His disciples, He asked what men thought concerning Him. They answered, "Some believe that Thou art John the Baptist, others Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets risen from the dead." Jesus said to them, "But whom do you say that I am?" And immediately St. Peter, falling on his knees, exclaimed, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Then it was that the Saviour allowed to fall from His lips the words which have travelled down the centuries with such marvellous fertility, and which still shine resplendently at Rome, graven in gigantic characters above the tomb of the

apostle—"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."

You have doubtless often heard this passage of the Gospel read, but have you ever fully fathomed the depth and the strength of its meaning?

First of all, we see that it was God Himself who had inspired St. Peter, and had made known to him the truth of the faith.

"*Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven.*" St. Peter was already the elect of God the Father, and for this reason he became the elect of God the Son. "*And I*"—the Son of God made man, the Christ, the Messiah, to whom thou hast just rendered witness—"*I say to thee.*" Jesus Christ to St. Peter! the Master to His disciple! God to His Pontiff! the Head of the Church, who has reigned in heaven since His ascension, to him whom He had chosen to be, in His name, and by His authority, the visible head of the Church upon earth. "*I say to thee, That thou art Peter.*" I change thy natural name of Simon into a new and symbolical name. "*And upon this rock,*" this *living* rock, as upon an immovable foundation, "*I will build My Church,*" and the very strength and firmness of the foundation shall give to it so perfect a stability, and so mighty a power, that "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Thou shalt teach the truth to My Church, and for this reason it shall be infallible in faith; thou shalt guide it in the path which leads to a glorious eternity, and for this reason it shall be holy. I intrust My Church to thee; I have but *one* true Church, as a husband who has but *one* lawful wife. And by what clear and evident sign shall men recognise this one true Church, amongst the innumerable religious societies which lay claim to her glorious title? By one certain and distinctive mark; if she rest on thee; if thou thyself, and thou alone, art her foundation, strength, and centre of unity—her father, pastor, doctor, and pontiff. "*Upon this rock I will build My*

Church." My kingdom shall be that in which thou shalt reign. My law shall be that which thou shalt teach. Whoever shall be with thee, shall be, for that reason alone, with Me, and whoever shall separate himself from thee, shall separate himself from Me, and from the life eternal.

The powers of hell shall not be able to prevail against the Church, since they shall be powerless against thee. Persecutions shall come, heresies, and revolutions. Fear not, I am with thee, and upon thee ever rests My Church, which shall endure unto the end of the world. Those who desire to break thee shall be broken against thee, since thou art the corner and foundation-stone, destined to become by My power the one centre of attraction to the whole moral world.

And the power that I will give thee shall be proportioned to the glory conferred upon thee, and to the vast requirements of thy ministry: "*Whatsoever thou shalt bind or loose upon earth, shall be bound or loosed in heaven;*" and thus thy voice shall be as the voice of heaven, and thy infallible dictums shall precede the dictums of the eternal truth. That which thou shalt bless, I will bless; that which thou shalt curse, I will curse. . . . Blessed is the man who is obedient to the voice of Peter!

Such is the true meaning of those scriptural words which have ever confounded, and shall eternally confound, the irrational rebellion of Protestants against the Catholic Apostolic Roman Church, which is governed by the Pope, the legitimate successor of St. Peter.

Before ascending into heaven the Son of God solemnly confirmed His promise, of which some might have imagined that St. Peter by his sin had forfeited the fulfilment. "Simon, lovest thou Me?" Jesus asked three times of His apostle. "Yea, Lord," St. Peter three times answered, "*yea, Thou knowest that I love Thee!*" thus effacing by a triple protestation of love and devotion the triple denial of which he had been guilty. Then said our Lord to him, "*Feed My lambs—feed My sheep!*" The *lambs* of Jesus Christ are Christians who are obedient to the voice of this good Shepherd; His *sheep* are the bishops and priests by whose God-given power and spiritual fatherhood all Christians must be born again—born to the life eternal, by means of baptism, the sacraments, and the teaching of *the one true faith.*

thus St. Peter was solemnly appointed pastor of
iversal Church by Jesus Christ before His ascension
aven.

Pope, Bishop of the city of Rome, of which St.
vas the *first* bishop, is the successor of this great and
postle.

IX., the present Bishop of Rome, descends by an
rupted line of pontiffs from the prince of the apostles.
er commands, teaches, and governs the Christian
by means of Pius IX., or rather it is Jesus Christ
f who dwells within him, in order to be in Him and
n, the divine Head of his own Church. It is not
an whom Catholics revere in Pius IX.; it is the
f Jesus Christ; it is Jesus Christ Himself who covers
ith His shadow, and endows him with a royal
acy over His disciples.

man in the Pope should be, and generally *is*, by
vidence of God, worthy of esteem, by reason of his
; but even were he an utterly *bad* man, the divine
y of his authority would remain uninjured; just as
r, who has a claim upon the honour and obedience
children because he is their father, although they
now that, as a man, he has been guilty of many
le actions. There are two persons in the Pope: the
nd the man;—as a man, he is more or less estimable,
ng to the virtues that he possesses; as a Pope, he is
worthy of all our reverence, and has a right to our
and unquestioning obedience. It is not the man, it
Pope who is always guided by the Holy Ghost.

e have been two hundred and fifty-eight popes, from
er to the time of our Holy Father Pius IX. now reign-
f this number more than eighty have either borne the
f martyrdom, or have led lives of such eminent holi-
at they are numbered amongst the saints. Scarcely
three have soiled the chair of St. Peter by notorious
The greater part have been men eminent either
ir capacity, their piety, or their benevolence. But
safely be affirmed that not one amongst them has
ed more of the charm of virtue than our present
, Pius IX.

peace of God shines from his face. The well-known
eristics of his calm and equable nature are goodness
nevolence—a clear intellect, and a constant cheerful-

ness. His regular features, his eyes of an undefinable expression, and the calm dignity of his manner, are in him the visible signs and outward revelations of the beauty of holiness. He is at once the Sovereign Pontiff, and the good Father. It is a great happiness to receive the blessing of the Pope, and especially of such a Pope. It is a great happiness to be able to make a pilgrimage to Rome, and to see the successor of St. Peter celebrating the Holy Sacrifice upon the very tomb of the apostle, and offering to the adoration of the faithful the hidden God of whom he is the Pontiff and the Vicar.

WHICH IS THE TRUE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST?

AMONGST the religious communities which all claim to be considered the true Church, it is of the highest importance to distinguish the one which speaks truly from the rest who are deceived.

Our Lord gives us in His Gospel an infallible means, a sure and evident sign by which we may recognise His Church. And is it not an historical fact, clear as the day, and quite beyond the reach of contradiction, that the one Catholic Apostolic Roman Church is founded upon St. Peter, the *first* Bishop of Rome, the *first* Pope?

Therefore all other Churches, whatever they may be, are false Churches, which do not come from God, and do not lead to God, but are opposed to the Gospel, and have no right to say that they are in conformity with the divine institution.

Therefore every true-hearted and truth-loving man, who has the fear of God before his eyes, is bound by his conscience, so soon as he shall be convinced of error, to go out from that false Church, in which he has had the misfortune to be born, and enter, obedient to the voice which calls him, into the true fold of Jesus Christ, which is the Catholic Church. And if he has the happiness to be born a Catholic, he should thank God for it every day of his life, *and should* be ready to suffer all things, even death, rather

than fail, under any circumstances, in obedience to the Pope.

Nothing is easier than to know if you belong to Jesus Christ and to His Church. You only need to know which Church has the Pope for its Head, and then to enter into this Church. It is a test which requires nothing but simple reason, and which is open to the whole world.

IN WHAT SENSE THE CHURCH IS HOLY.

THE Church of Jesus Christ is holy—that is to say, she is the enemy of all evil, which is sin. Does that mean that all the members of the Church are holy—that all her pontiffs are impeccable? Certainly not. Man here on earth remains always *man*, viz., weak, inconstant, and more inclined to evil than to good. In what sense, then, is the Church holy? The Church is holy: 1. In the sense that her Divine Founder and Master is holy. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Founder of the Church, and He is holiness itself. 2. In the sense that the first envoys of Christ were holy. St. Peter and the apostles were the first fathers of the Catholic Church, which they preached and established throughout the world; our own Churches trace their origin to them, through an uninterrupted succession of bishops and pontiffs. And who can tell to what sublime heights of sanctity the apostles reached, who could all say with St. Paul, to those whom they converted, "Be imitators of us as we are of Jesus Christ." And these holy apostles not only lived for God, but also died for Him, and have borne the martyrs' palm. 3. The Church is holy in the sense that her doctrine is holy. All that is taught by the Catholic Church is good and true, and comes direct from God. 4. The Church is holy, because, by means of the sacraments, prayer, and the true worship of God, she renders holy all men who gladly obey her.

The Church tends only to render us all truly holy, perfectly holy, each in our condition. If a Christian does evil, and leaves the path of holiness, it is because he disobeys the Church, and neglects the means of grace she freely offers him. The man who is constant, faithful to the religious direction of *the Church*, to habitual prayer, to very frequent

communion, to Christian instruction, in devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and in all the exercises of Catholic piety, will infallibly and quickly become holy, and will love God and his neighbour with his whole heart. 5. The Church is holy, because she has produced in all centuries, and will ever produce, a glorious band of saints—a band of men, and women, and children, and pontiffs, and priests, who practise all Christian graces with Christian heroism, and who are to other men noble examples of purity and chastity and devotion, of prayer and strength and meekness, of humility, and Christian abnegation. The saints are living samples of the finished work of that Church which has produced them—living witnesses to the holiness of the Mother who has borne them. 6. Lastly, the Church is holy in the significant sense that she condemns and rejects from her bosom all that is false, mean, unhallowed, and defiling. She is ever the first to disgrace and stigmatise the few false priests who from time to time renew the treachery of Judas, forget the holiness of their mission, and scandalise the world by some deplorable fall.

Would it be just to impute the crime of Judas to the holy and faithful apostles of Christ, to St. John, to St. Peter, to St. Paul?

The heartfelt sorrow of the Church when one of her priests falls into sin, the terrible indignation with which she prohibits, expels, and excommunicates him if he persevere in evil, is the most evident proof of her holiness. The weapon which ignorance and unbelief uses against the Church is therefore precisely the one which defends her most victoriously against their perfidious attacks.

The Church is holy, and whoever listens to her voice either *is* holy, or will *become* holy.

ON MIRACLES.

MIRACLES are the crowning evidence of Jesus Christ and of His Church. A miracle is an indubitable sign of divinity. What is a miracle? Is such a thing possible? Have there ever been any real miracles. Why have they altogether *ceased?*

These are some of the questions so fluently propounded by people who flatter themselves that they are acquainted with religion, whilst they are in truth utterly ignorant of it. We will endeavour to answer their questions as briefly as possible, praying that God may deign to render our arguments effective.

I. *A* MIRACLE *is an outward and visible fact, which clearly surpasses the powers of nature.* It is a fact so far above the power of *man* that he is conscientiously obliged to say to himself, *The finger of God is there.*

A miracle is the means which God uses to show forth His presence, and to manifest His intervention amongst men. It is an irrefragable proof, open to all of the divinity of any doctrine. A man proclaims that he is sent from God; he teaches that the whole world should believe in him, that his doctrine is true, and that it comes from heaven. But in whatever age, and in whatever country this claim is advanced, men will immediately ask the very question which the Jews asked of the Saviour, on the borders of the Lake of Tiberias, "What sign dost thou show unto us that we may believe?" and if this man is truly sent from God, still more if (like Jesus Christ) he is God Himself, He will answer by an undeniable proof, "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again! . . . The works which do give testimony of Me that the Father hath sent me. . . . Though you will not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

In a word, miracles are the characteristic sign, the inviolable and unmistakable seal which God affixes to His word, and by which He renders any counterfeit totally impossible.

II. "Are miracles possible?"

Is it necessary to answer such a question? It means simply, "Is God the Lord of the whole earth?" Cannot He who ordained and established the laws of nature momentarily arrest these laws, that He may do good to His own children? "This question, seriously treated, would be impious, if it were not absurd," said a celebrated unbeliever, Jean Jacques Rousseau; and any man who could answer such a question in the negative would truly deserve to be treated as insane. But what man has ever denied that God could do *miracles?*

III. "Have there ever been any real miracles?"

Undoubtedly, since the crucified Jesus, who requires from men the renunciation of all their dearest passions, has been adored for eighteen centuries throughout the length and breadth of the world. To endeavour to explain the triumph and perpetuity of Christianity without the intervention of many great and wonderful works, is to ignore the very nature of the Christian religion, the nature of man, the history of both; it is a miracle of ignorance and infatuation. Can you possibly believe without doing violence to your reason that when Christianity first presented itself to the world, springing from the foot of the shameful cross, and exacting then, as it exacts now, the sacrifice of prejudice and passion, the sacrifice of worldly honour, goods, liberty, and life? Can you believe that men did not simultaneously demand of its Author—"Prove to us that you come from God, by doing the works that God alone can do. Work miracles, or we will neither believe in the strange mysteries you announce, nor practise the hard precepts you command?" Jesus Christ has had His witnesses; and in what numbers, then, is it possible that millions of men, of all ages, of all conditions in all countries, should have been willing to die the most frightful deaths without having demanded of this religion, for which they sacrificed themselves, an evident *proof* of its divinity?

"But there are pretended miracles," some will say; and this is only an additional proof that there are true ones. There must of necessity be good coinage there, where men try to circulate false. Why do they make false coinage? It is because they hope to pass it as genuine money. And how can they hope to do this, if in reality there *is* no genuine money, to which the spurious bears a resemblance? Thus false miracles have only been credited because they resembled the true, and they are, for this reason, a valuable witness to the reality of such.

"Why have miracles altogether ceased?"

The question is a curious one, for there are *still* miracles—*many* miracles. If people were only a little better acquainted with religious facts, they would know that saints are canonised at Rome in our time, as in all past ages; and none are canonised without a rigorous examination which authenticates at least *five* miracles worked by their intercession. *In face of the* extraordinary severity which rules this species

of trial, and the well-known prudence of Rome, who shall dare to say that there are no more miracles? There are fewer miracles than at the commencement of Christianity—1st, Because the true end of miracles has been attained, namely, the conversion of the world, and the establishment of the Christian religion. 2d, Because we have before our eyes to-day as striking and as miraculous a proof of the divinity of our faith as miracles themselves could be to the early Christians. I mean the prophecies of the Gospel and their accomplishment in the world. The early Christians saw the miracles of Jesus Christ and of His apostles, but they did not see the accomplishment of their prophecies. They were, nevertheless, obliged to believe in them firmly, because of the miracles they saw. Just as a miracle was a decisive proof to the first Christians, so is prophecy a decisive proof to us, who have clear evidence of the divine fact of its accomplishment.

And let us observe, in conclusion, that the evidence gathered from the fulfilment of the prophecies is perhaps still more decisive than that which is gathered from miracles, for this reason, that time adds to its force, day after day. For instance, the stability of the Seat of St. Peter, the preservation of the Jewish people, though cursed and scattered all over the world, are far more striking facts now than they could have been four or five hundred years ago. And how much more will this be the case four or five thousand years hence, if the world last so long (which is more than doubtful)?

Therefore, there *are* miracles, though fewer than formerly, because the occasion has greatly ceased; and they are sent no longer as an evidence of the truth, but are given as divine consolations. The miracle which fills the world is the Holy Catholic Church.

TRUTH AND ERROR.

THERE is but one true religion, as we have continually repeated. In all centuries the spirit of falsehood and error has raised up in opposition to this holy religion many *contrary beliefs* which are only human inventions. To all such we give the name of heresy, which means simply a false faith. All have one marked characteristic. Man alone has been their originator, and they do not descend

from the apostles. Separated from the truth, which is nowhere to be found in its completeness but in the Catholic Church, these false religions endure for a time, then perish, having first ruined the souls of men, and brought forth the fruits of indifference and irreligion. In the midst of all the dissension and confusion which ever accompanies mistaken creeds, the ancient Church of God remains ever the same, teaching ever the same true doctrine, preaching ever the same pure morality, and producing ever in the hearts of her children the same sublime virtues. This difference need not cause astonishment; the work of God does not resemble the works of men, and Jesus Christ, the divine Founder of the Church, will not suffer it to be shaken.

Jesus Christ—God;—here lies the all-potent secret of the life of the Catholic Church. The absence of Jesus Christ—separation from God;—here lies the formidable secret of weakness and the ultimate downfall of every false religion.

Towards the end of the French Revolution, men began to feel once more the need of God, and many religious attempts preceded the re-establishment of the Catholic religion by the Emperor Napoleon in the year 1802. One of these useless attempts originated with a certain citizen named Laréveillère Lépeaux, who called his pretended religion the worship of the theophilanthropists, viz., of those who love both God and men. The poor man did not know that this worship was as old as the world, and that its true name was Christianity. Notwithstanding all his efforts, and the public influence he was able to command, as one of the members of the Directory, Laréveillère did not succeed. People laughed both at himself and his ceremonies; and there *was* much to laugh at. The disappointed founder was one day bewailing his want of success to his friend, M. de Talleyrand, whose answer was both sarcastic and profound, "What can you expect, my dear fellow?" he asked maliciously. "The *desire* to found a religion is not all that is required. Try to die on Friday, and to rise on Sunday, and you will see that *that* will succeed."

It is the same with all Protestant sects, and all Churches separated from Rome, as with theophilanthropism—"It does not succeed!" and never will succeed, because truth alone has the privilege of real success.

CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT.

In all Protestant countries where the great mass of the people are cut off from the communion of the Catholic Church, it is consoling to reflect that, although prevented by ignorance from belonging to the *body* of the Church, they may yet belong unconsciously to the *soul* of the Church by living pure and holy lives in accordance with her teaching. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children; and thus it is that Protestants are *separated* from that Church which is truly the Church of their baptism, and, of by far the greater number of those who resist and condemn her influence and her teaching, it may be said with truth that "they know not what they do." Yet, let no one think for a moment that this sad division is therefore a matter of slight importance, and that it is possible, by unmeaning or by conciliating words, to span the mighty gulf which separates truth from error; it is of the *highest* importance to know whether the Catholic who says *yes*, is right or wrong when opposed to the Protestant who says *no*. Let us, then, briefly consider the chief points upon which they differ.

The Catholic Church presents itself to the world as the emissary of our Lord Jesus Christ, commissioned by Him and *solely* commissioned to preach His religion through the whole earth,—to preserve the faith entrusted to it, and to defend it against all errors,—to interpret Christian revelation, and to make clear to all men what they must believe, practise, and avoid in order to save their souls. She presents herself as endowed with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, who sustains and preserves her in the accomplishment of her divine mission. Protestants, on the contrary, declare that the Catholic Church has *corrupted* Christianity, —that her doctrines are contrary to the gospel, and that her teaching is not from God; and thus they cry out with one voice against her, "Away, away! we will not have thee to reign over us!"

The Catholic Church proclaims and reveres in the Pope the successor of St. Peter. The Catholic's rule of faith is the infallible teaching of the Church—that is, of the Pope and the bishops. The Protestant refuses to acknowledge

any doctor but himself,—reading the Bible and interpreting it as he wills. Hence, amongst Catholics, a fixed religious doctrine, which nothing can change—immovable as truth itself; and, amongst Protestants, such a variance in belief that each one can change his doctrine every day and every moment.

The Catholic adores in the Eucharist Jesus Christ Himself, who declared that He was really present there, and that the living bread which He would give to the world would be His own Body. Protestants see in the Eucharist but a symbol, a fragment of bread!

The Catholic venerates and invokes the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of his Saviour. The Protestant regards her with an unconquerable indifference, and entirely misapprehends the *nature* of the devotion that the Catholic feels to her.

It is asserted that Protestant belief is entirely founded upon the Bible, but it is an incontrovertible fact that one man may explain a passage in *one* sense, whilst another will explain it in a totally *different* sense. Men have been known to have sixteen wives at once, whilst they cited some passage in the Bible as their authority; others, still under pretext of the *Word* of God, have believed themselves bound to kill their children after their baptism, in order to send them to heaven; others, in great numbers, have become involved in such extravagant and grotesque hallucinations, that it is hard to conceive how they could have ever been credited. And hence, from a universal system of private judgment, in which there is no unity, arise divisions which lead on to ultimate downfall. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," said the Divine Founder of the Christian Church.

And who can deny that unity, the very secret of strength, is to be found in the Catholic Church alone? Do we not see it ever immutable, ever peaceful in its strength, ever fruitful in holy works and saintly lives. . . . There alone may be found the realisation of all the solemn promises given by Jesus Christ to His Church; there alone may be found, living and acting, that sacred *authority* which the Saviour established to lead the faithful in the way of salvation, when He said to His apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." A very clever Protestant has just become a Catholic, because *of the* words, spoken to St. Peter alone, "Where can there

realisation be found," he asked, "except amongst Catholics?" They alone rest upon St. Peter, who continues to govern, teach, and rule the Church. Let us conclude these reflections by one important consideration. A devout and well-informed Catholic has never been known to become a Protestant in order to serve God better, whilst we see every day, and now more than ever, the most highly enlightened Protestants being led back to the Catholic faith by a profound study of religion, and an earnest desire to live holier lives. Still more, a good Catholic has never been known to become a Protestant when at the point of death; and Protestants have very often become Catholics at that supreme moment, when truth alone could influence so serious a decision.

This single fact should suffice to show upon which side is religious truth.

A FEW FURTHER REMARKS UPON PROTESTANTISM.

In order to be a Christian it is not sufficient simply to believe that Jesus Christ is God; it is also necessary to believe all that He has revealed to the world, and to practise His religion in the manner that He has Himself commanded. Jesus Christ, by sending His apostles, proclaimed that all men were bound to listen to their teaching as though it were His own; they alone were commissioned to teach all nations the truths of Christianity, and whoever would not hear them was to be as a heathen unto them. It was the will of Jesus Christ that Christians should have recourse to them, and to them alone, in all their spiritual needs, and it was for this purpose that He promised to His apostles and to their successors unto the end of the world the assistance of the Holy Ghost; He clothed them with His own priestly character, that they might have power to sanctify their brethren by the preaching of the true faith, and by the administration of the sacraments, and especially that they might have power to forgive their sins, and to offer continually to God the most holy sacrifice of the Eucharist.

For this reason, those who truly desire to find Jesus Christ, to become children of God, members of His family

and sheep in His fold, must go to those who alone were intrusted by the Saviour with all that relates to religion. He that despiseth them, despiseth Jesus Christ; he that rejects them, rejects the religion of Jesus Christ, the true faith, and the knowledge and service of God.

The only legitimate pastors of the flock of Jesus Christ are the bishops of the Catholic Church. Protestants who, unhappily for themselves, reject their authority, are like blind men who fly from the light.

"But," it is again said, "have they not the same Gospel as Catholics?" They have the letter but not the spirit; and the letter kills (as said the apostle St. Paul); it is the spirit, *the true meaning*, which gives life. The letter of the Bible is the ruin of Protestants, as it was formerly the ruin of the Jews. Protestants reject, even as the Jews rejected, the sacred teaching of those whom God sends to explain the true meaning of the letter. The Jews rejected the teaching of the Son of God and His apostles, and their stubbornness proved their ruin.

The Bible is nothing without the Church. The Church is the living and speaking institution founded by Jesus Christ to explain the Bible, to preserve, preach, defend, and practically apply the Christian revelation, of which the Holy Scriptures form a principal part. It is the Church, and the Church alone, who, in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, can infallibly make known the divine inspiration of the Holy Bible; it is she alone who can unquestionably distinguish those books which are inspired from those which are not; it is she alone who can determine the true meaning of obscure or contested passages by the light of the same Holy Spirit, who inspired the books themselves; and lastly, it is from her that Protestants have received these writings. Without the Church, the Bible and the Gospel are nothing but a dead letter—merely words. The Bible is no longer the word of God, because it is no longer according to the mind of God. Every Protestant—every Protestant clergyman—interprets the sacred words according to the ever-changing tenor of his mind, and often forces them into a false subservience to his own unfounded opinions. This mode of interpretation carried to an extreme, will even provide its adherents with a cloak for wrong-doing, and enable them to say, By following my *inclinations* I am not only exempt from sin, but I am

doing the will of God! This subject recalls to us the slightly stinging answer made by a good and holy prelate (Monsignor de Cheverus, Archbishop of Bordeaux) to a Protestant clergyman who had engaged in a discussion with him, and had cited in opposition to his remarks a number of texts from the Bible—texts both misunderstood and misapplied, and having, besides, no possible connection with each other.

"Is it not written in the Gospel, my dear sir," said the prelate calmly, when the minister had ended his quotations, —"is it not written that Judas hung himself?" "Certainly," answered the minister, slightly surprised. "And is it not also written, 'Go, and do thou in like manner?' Why, then, have you not yet *hung* yourself?" The minister retired from the conflict, ensnared and much confused.

Thus it follows that by constantly applying the Bible illogically, unconnectedly, and according to fancy, men are able to gather from the most sublime of books the most absurd and dangerous ideas. For this reason, a living and infallible interpreter is needed to explain this book, just as a judge and a tribunal are needed to expound and declare a law. This interpreter is the Catholic Church.

ANGELS AND SAINTS.

We are here on earth only that we may hereafter attain to heaven. There is no exception to this rule, and whoever fails to reach heaven is eternally lost—eternally condemned to the flames of hell. The irreligious and the unbelieving may say what they will; the fact remains the same, and no words of theirs will alter it.

This present life is the time for work; the future life is the time of rest and reward. Those who have already gained this rest and this reward are angels and saints. The angels are pure spirits, who at the moment of their creation, in the beginning of time, adored Jesus Christ, incarnate upon earth, and revealed to them by God from afar, and thus merited by this act of faith, submission, and humility all the glory and the blessedness of paradise. As

their head is the great archangel or seraphim St. Michael, the archangel Gabriel, and the archangel Raphael, whose sacred names are all mentioned in the Holy Scriptures.

All those who amongst the angelic spirits were not willing to believe in Jesus Christ, and to accept as their true God the Son of Mary, were instantly condemned, and are called devils or demons. The chief amongst them is named Lucifer or Satan.

The holy angels are in heaven—that is to say, they enjoy, in the bosom of God, and in union with the Lord Jesus Christ, a beatitude which no creature can at all comprehend, seeing God face to face, fully participating in His infinite blessedness, and bathed in the infinite ocean of the joy and the peace, the light, and the life of the Holy Ghost. They are lost in the fulness of infinite and immeasurable love; and by one single act of love which never ends, and of which we cannot, here below, even comprehend the perfection and the rapture, they adore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; they praise Him, and bless Him through Jesus Christ, who is their heavenly King, and the principle of their happiness.

The number of the angels is incalculable. There are seven principal, as we learn from the archangel Raphael when he revealed himself to his dear Tobias—"*I am*," he said, "the angel Raphael, one of seven who stand before the throne of God." The "throne of God" is the sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, present in heaven, and also upon earth in the Blessed Sacrament, and which these seven great archangels, princes of the heavenly army, continually adore. These same seven archangels preside over the six days of creation and the seventh, which is the day of grace; over the six days of the week and the Sunday; over the seven sacraments of the Church; over the diffusion amongst men of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; and lastly, over the seven great epochs of the life of the world, from the creation of Adam until the final judgment.

The angels are divided into nine choirs and into three great orders, which we call hierarchies (viz., *holy powers*). To each of these choirs belong special attributes, which it would take too long to enumerate here; but it is very consoling to know that all, without any exception, for such is *the express* teaching of the Gospel, are employed in the

great work of our salvation. "Are they not *all* ministering spirits," said St. Paul, "sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" In this sense, we are more than the angels, since they are for us, and we are not for them. Oh, how noble a work of God is the baptized Christian in whom Jesus Christ constantly dwells, and who is thus helped and served and loved by the angels. Amongst these holy angels, who are *all* our friends and ministering spirits, there is, however, one whom we should more especially love, because in the day of our baptism, and in other still more solemn circumstances of our life, he is given to us as our special protector, guide, defender, and friend. He it is whom we call our angel-guardian.

All lawful superiors, whether spiritual or temporal, receive from God, who has thus raised them in dignity above other men, angel-guardians of a superior hierarchy, who assist them more efficaciously. Thus the most sacred humanity of the Saviour, and thus the Holy Virgin, Mother and tabernacle of God, had as guardians and assistants the seven great seraphims of whom we have been speaking. There is every reason to believe that Adam in the terrestrial paradise, and afterwards Abel, and Seth, and each of the five patriarchs who were with Noah, Abraham, David, Mary, and Joseph, ancestors of the Saviour, had as their angel-guardian the most holy archangel Michael, prince of the angels, and that this same seraphim is still the angel-guardian of each sovereign pontiff, Head of the Church upon earth, even from St. Peter until the last pope who shall govern the Church at the second coming of our Lord; also that bishops and Christian kings have as guardians celestial spirits, high in dignity; the same may be said, in a more carefully guarded degree, of priests and of superiors in general. Each diocese and each empire has for its angel-guardian one of the princes of the heavens; each parish, each church has equally its angel; even the graves which receive our mortal bodies have their protector and celestial guardians, as the Church declares in her liturgy.

The *saints* are men who, during their pilgrimage in this world, so faithfully corresponded to the graces of Jesus Christ, to the teaching of His Church, and to the assistance of the holy angels, that after their death they have obtained the mercy of God, and have taken their place, each accord-

ing to his merits and degree of holiness, in the glorious hierarchies of paradise.

Thus there are in heaven saints who are superior to many of the angels in glory, happiness, perfection, and power. Thus the Blessed Virgin, though a simple woman, and a human creature, is so far above all cherubims and seraphims that she alone constitutes in heaven an Order—a separate hierarchy.

Amongst the saints of the Old Testament, Abraham, the great servant of God, Moses, David, and St. John the Baptist must possess in the courts of heaven a most exalted dignity; and amongst the saints of the New, who could say to what an incomparable height of glory a St. Joseph, a St. Peter, a St. Paul, and a St. John have attained? and, in times nearer to our own, a St. Benedict, a St. Francis of Assisi, a St. Dominic, a St. Catherine of Sienna, a St. Theresa, a St. Ignatius, a St. Charles Borromeo, a St. Francis of Sales. Ah! how great our happiness to see these shining stars, these glorious saints whom we have loved and reverenced on earth, in that day when we ourselves shall enter heaven to take a lowly place amongst the saints. How great the love that they will have for us, that we shall have for them, in paradise. Let us then strive, whilst we have still the power to merit, to labour constantly for our own sanctification, and never to wander from the narrow way which leads to heaven.

Let us advance in the practice of all Christian virtues, remembering that in this road we must either go forward or go back; let us advance in the spirit of faith, in the constant recollection of the presence of God, in constant union with Jesus our dear Saviour, who reposes in the faithful heart, in a courageous practice of penance, prayer, detachment, humility, and gentleness of work, and patience and obedience and chastity; let us very often approach the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist; and living in the sight of God, and under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, let us be true and fervent Christians upon earth, that we may be hereafter saints in heaven.

The feast of All Saints, which is celebrated on the first of November, is intended to recall to our minds what awaits us after life, to induce us to celebrate with holy joy the victories and the blessedness of the saints, to cause us to invoke them with greater earnestness, and to draw down upon

by these means, through their powerful intercession, very ındant graces and special benedictions. This festival ɔ enables us to honour and venerate with religious rites .t innumerable multitude of holy souls, who are in ıven, but who are not *canonised* by the Church—that o say, who have not been *officially* declared *holy* by the ıreme authority of the Pope, and who (but for this .utiful feast of All Saints) would not receive from the ırch upon earth that honour to which they have a ht.

All Saints will be one day *our festival*—yes, even ours, ugh saints of lowliest degree, who are not canonisable, l who never will be canonised.

THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

the 2d of November the Church celebrates a feast which ıt the same time most solemn and most touching. This the *commemoration* (or *remembrance*) *of the faithful arted.*

This feast does not concern the souls of *all* those who ʼe gone before us on this earth. Many are already in enjoyment of the eternal rest of heaven, and their feast ɔelebrated the day before, on November 1st, the day of . Saints. These are the souls of those who, when their thly probation was over, were found in a state of grace he moment of death, and also of those whose purification m sin in the flames of purgatory is already ended. These y souls have no further need of our suffrages. They ı only receive our homage and our prayers; they have ever entered into joy and into perfect gladness. . . .

There are other souls, alas! and in great numbers, with om this sacred commemoration has no connection: these the souls of those who are eternally and irrevocably con- nned to the torments of hell because they rejected God, l separated themselves from His love, during that time en they were able to choose between good and evil, be- ɔen the love of God and the love of sin. There is no st, there are no prayers for *them*, neither in the Church ich is still militant on earth, nor in the Church which ɔady reigns in heaven. For them there is nothing but

an eternal remorse, an eternal despair, an eternal void, nothing but these eternally revenging flames, which devour without consuming—those flames of which Jesus Christ speaks so often in His Gospel as the certain doom of sinners. "They shall be cast," He says, "into everlasting fire, into the fire which is not extinguished, where the victims shall be salted with fire (that is to say, preserved and yet penetrated), and where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." . . .

The feast of *All Souls* relates, therefore, to the souls in purgatory alone. Purgatory is a state of suffering in which those souls who were found at the time of death in a state of grace, but who had not sufficiently expiated their sins by repentance, are perfectly purified that they may be worthy to appear amongst the saints.

Purgatory is that formidable future in which we are destined to pay all that we owe to divine justice. Purgatory presents the darkness and the desolation, the grief and the remorse of hell. There is the same terrible fire, there are the same torments; *everything* is the same save despair and eternity. The same fire torments the lost souls in hell and the penitent souls in purgatory; and St. Augustine, summing up the tradition of the Church of the first four centuries, says, that "the same fire which consumes the chaff (viz., the reprobate) refines the gold," viz., those just souls who have left this world without having done penance in sufficient proportion to the number and gravity of their sins.

Therefore they burn these afflicted souls; they burn in an actual although a supernatural fire, in a fire which has as complete access to the undying spirit as the fires of earth to the human body. The justice of God gives to this cleansing fire an activity which we cannot conceive, and of which the intense ardour of the fire that acts upon our senses is but a feeble symbol.

These souls are in *outer darkness*, like the souls of the lost. They know not the time when their expiation will be ended. . . . Perhaps not for twenty years—a hundred years! perhaps not until the end of the world! . . . Terrible perhaps! how greatly it must add to the pain of this punishment! but also how clearly it should cause us to realise the greatness and the enormity of sin, even of trivial, venial sin, since *the God of* everlasting love exacts for it from the creatures

who love Him, and whom He Himself loves, so terrible a punishment.

But the greatest suffering of the souls in purgatory lies in their separation from God, from Jesus, their much-beloved Saviour. Here on earth the desire and love of the supreme good, the aspiration of the soul to God, its only, last, and infinitely lovely end, are incessantly weakened, counteracted, and sometimes even extinguished by the cares of life; but after death the Christian soul, plunged into purgatory, disengaged from the body, disentangled from all creatures which obscured its vision, aspires to God alone, desiring nothing beyond the one immeasurable good, now become the sole object of its love. It has one only impulse, and tends alone to God. But, by reason of the lingering stains of sin, this unhappy soul, repulsed from the sole object of its love, still languishes in grief and desolation. It is assured that it will one day possess this infinite good which it desires with all its strength, and it is this future happiness which causes its actual suffering. Such are the souls in purgatory; such are the souls of many of those whom we have loved, and who have loved us on earth—our father, mother, brothers, sisters, and our best loved friends. . . . Shall we forsake them when we can help to deliver them from such suffering? Shall we be deaf to their prayers and indifferent to their tears? They call to us from out the abyss of pain, "My child, my father, my friend—oh! thou whom I have loved so much, and who, in days gone by, returned me love for love, wilt thou so soon forget me, and withhold the prayers which would hasten my deliverance from this pain?"

Hard indeed must be the heart which can resist this cry. We will listen to their prayers. We will hasten to their aid. Let us hear the merciful voice of the Church, our mother, teaching us that we are able and are bound to help them by our prayers, by our good works, by our alms, and by our penances, but especially by the oblation of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for their eternal repose. God our Father and theirs deigns to apply to them, and to pass on to their account all the expiatory merits of these holy works.

Lastly, a very powerful means for the deliverance of the suffering souls in purgatory lies in the indulgences which we may gain for their intention, and which we are authorised by the Church to apply to their relief.

There are most powerful motives to urge us to pray thus for the dead: 1st, If we forget them, God, by a just judgment, will permit that we shall be forgotten by them in our turn, and no one will pray for us after our death. 2nd, There are amongst them a great number to whom we have been united by the bonds of blood and friendship. We must not cease to show them love if we would prove our gratitude. 3rd, If we are so happy as to accomplish their deliverance they never forget so great a benefit, and will become our most fervent intercessors near to Jesus Christ. Perhaps it will be through *their* prayers we shall be saved. Let us pray much—and often for the souls in purgatory.

Let us often have the Holy Sacrifice offered for their deliverance. It is the best possible alms. Let us every day apply to them some indulgence.

The following are some of the simplest prayers to say, and have been enriched by the sovereign pontiffs with indulgences applicable to the souls in purgatory.

1. Seven years and seven quarantines (of days) to all who recite with devotion the three acts of faith, hope, and charity.

2. Three hundred days' indulgence for reciting the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

3. Idem, for the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus.

4. Idem, for the prayer: Remember, O most holy pious Virgin Mary, &c.; or, Memorare, &c.

5. For chaplets enriched by indulgences (viz., those of St. Bridget), a hundred days' indugence for each Pater and Ave, and a plenary indulgence once a month, and on all the great feasts of the year, for the faithful who recite these chaplets every day.

6. One year, each time for kissing a crucifix that has been blessed.

THE JUDGMENT.

We are all eager to know the future. It is this common desire which has given rise to so many ignorant abuses, to a foolish belief in sorcerers, fortune-tellers, spiritualists, and other impostors of this description, who laugh at the credulous people who consult them, who take their money, and *do not tell* them what they desire to know, for the simple

reason that they are quite incapable of doing so. God alone knows the future; that which will be is ever present to His infinite knowledge, even as that which has been, and that which is; and if we know for certain any single fact of our hereafter, it is only because God Himself has deigned to make it clear.

God has been pleased to reveal to us something of this hidden future, not to satisfy our vain curiosity, but to incite us to do right, to avoid sin, and to embrace with faith and fortitude the painful sacrifices which an unfaltering obedience to the divine law will often and necessarily impose upon us.

Of all these revealed truths, the most impressive, the one which does and which should affect us the most deeply, is undoubtedly the prediction of the *Last Judgment.*

We shall all be judged; nothing is more certain; it is God Himself, it is Jesus Christ our Lord become man for our salvation, who has unmistakably declared it; and He has not merely declared that the world would be judged, that this judgment would be for all, and that it would be fearful and terrible, but He has deigned to give a minute description which should serve to stamp its reality more forcibly upon the mind. He it is who said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away. I am the truth. He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Nothing, therefore, is more certain than that Jesus Christ the Son of God clearly foretold the judgment.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, our Lord, after He had portrayed the signs which were to be the forerunners of the second Advent (pestilence, wars, the confusion of the elements, the frightful overthrow of nature, the ravages of Antichrist, and the terrible struggles of His Church against the wicked), went on to describe how the clouds of heaven should be rent asunder, and how He Himself should come in all the glory of His majesty to judge the world.

All men then living shall be struck with death; but in a little time, at the supernatural sound of the trump of the archangel, they shall rise from the dead with all the human generations which have passed from the earth since Adam and Eve, even to the last day. All shall rise again with their bodies of flesh and bone; the souls shall be reunited

to the bodies which they formerly animated. The omnipotence of Him who brought all things forth from nothing shall allot to each human body which He calls from the dust of the grave that soul which was its former inhabitant. Then, gathered together before the tribunal of their Divine Judge, men shall submit to their eternal sentence; to the just, a sentence of eternal life, of eternal happiness, of everlasting joy; to the wicked, a sentence of eternal despair, of hopeless malediction, of undying pain, *and everlasting retribution.* At a sign from the Son of God, the angels, clothed with visible forms, shall separate this immense gathering of all the nations into two great divisions; one shall be on the right hand of Jesus Christ, and the other on the left. And then the eternal King shall pronounce this twofold sentence—"*Venite, benedicti Patris Mei, possidete parratum Vobis, regnum a constitutione mundi*"—"Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And the elect, to whom this heavenly invitation shall be given, shall enter immediately with the holy angels into the ineffable joy of their Lord.

Then the King shall turn to that other division of this vast human assembly, which, gathered on His left hand, still awaits the inexorable sentence—"*Recedite a Me, maledicti, in ignem æternum*"—"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." "And these," says the holy Gospel, "shall go at once into everlasting punishment." As the sudden falling of a thunderbolt shall be the utterance of this sentence to the miserable beings whom it shall strike and overwhelm. "Lord! banished from thy presence, Lord! banished from thee! Thou who art the Life, the Light, and the one eternal Good! and where, then, shall we go, where wilt Thou send us, Lord, and where shall we find refuge?" *In ignem.*—In fire, in everlasting fire. *In ignem æternum.*—In flames that shall never be quenched. In fires that shall never grow cold! Never! For ever! Alas, this dwelling-place! Alas, this terrible futurity!

But now no power can save them from the hands of Divine Justice. The time of mercy is for ever passed; nothing more remains but Justice—inflexible, immutable, and divine.

"If men only knew the judgments of God," said a holy hermit, when dying at the end of twelve years spent in *sanctifying* and incessant meditation on the divine judg-

—"if men only knew the judgments of God, they never sin!" Why do we not think of this salutary It could not fail to transform our lives; and however ent we may be, or perhaps even wicked and worthless, ld change us into true and earnest Christians, into ıled by the golden principles of duty, faith, and con-

.etimes we say, "It is too hard; I cannot." But *can* in a devouring fire, and dwell in everlasting burning? ıow clearly we shall then see that we *could* have done ht; and that for the work we deemed so hard, we nothing but a little courage and a little resolution. en the time will be for ever lost. Men die but once, ıe judgment which follows after death is beyond

. *how* do we now defend ourselves?—"I have no *time* —I cannot find *time* to go to confession.—I dare esent myself at the holy altar before the eyes of —all miserable delusions paving the way to eternal Delay no longer, but return at once to God, and e a holy Christian life. Believe me, there is no *time* itate. Use well the fleeting hours which separate om judgment. You cannot tell how few they may 'repare yourself by the practice of fervent prayer, quenting the sacraments, by hallowing the Sunday, ving earnestly to do in all things the perfect will of Prepare yourself thus for a favourable sentence, and entreat you, to our Heavenly Father that neither or I, nor any that we love, may have one day to hear terrible words which shall shake the whole earth: *edite a Me, maledicti, in ignem æternum.*"—"Depart ne, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!"

LIFE ETERNAL.

Credo concludes with one short sentence, which is profound, but is unfortunately very little understood. having spoken of God, of the Trinity, of the divine ıs, of the mystery of creation, of Jesus Christ, the Son l made man, of the Church, which unfolds to the world the mysteries of Redemption, the apostles

added to the Credo the words, "I believe in the life everlasting;" and with these they have concluded. And there is, in truth, nothing beyond; and it is on this mysterious eternity that we must for a moment reflect.

We are accustomed to speak of the moment in which the human life of man draws to its close, consigning him to an immortal life in the bosom of God as his *last end*. Death—judgment—purgatory—a glorious eternity in paradise—a fearful eternity in hell: these are the grand realities which confront us when we speak of our *last end*.

There is no necessity for declaring that life ends with death. But what is death? what happens then? what is this terrible change? This soul which only a few instants ago made use of all the organs of the body—to think, to see, to hear, to act,—what is it doing? where is it gone? and if it is still living in some world into which we cannot penetrate, what is its fate, and what the destiny that awaits it?—Great questions which religion alone can answer truly, because the God of eternity, Jesus Christ our Lord, has revealed its hidden secrets.

Our life on earth is but a short and transitory preparation for the life everlasting. Death is the end of the journey. When we have arrived at the end of our probation, our Creator examines the manner in which we have passed it, and, in His infinite justice, He renders to each according to his works. He casts out of His presence those who have had no desire for His love; and He gives Himself, with the infinite treasures of His perfect holiness and happiness, to all who have loved and served Him faithfully, and who, whilst still on earth, lived in and with Him. At the moment of death, our soul will lose its power over our body, and turning to God, who dwells concealed within it, it will enter upon eternity in a changed and unalterable condition of either life or death, happiness or misery, holiness or damnation. An *unalterable* condition, because the soul has now no chance of changing; it can no longer, as on earth, turn from evil to good, or from good to evil, because to effect this change *time* is absolutely necessary, and in eternity time is not, nor any succession of moments. In this world, moments succeed to moments; and if we can pass from a state of sin to a state of grace, or from a state of grace to a state of sin, it is only because we have *time to change*. In eternity this is no longer the case; it is a

different life, a different method of existence, which has no manner of resemblance to our life on earth; it is an entirely indivisible life without any succession of instants—a life similar to the life of God, for whom there is neither past nor future, but one eternal, immutable, and perfect *present*, which passes human comprehension. In heaven, the life of the just is one eternal act of love and infinite beatitude; in hell, the life of the lost is one eternal and immutable act of malediction, fury, and despair. It is absolutely contrary to the very nature of eternity, good or evil, that it could change, whatever it may be; and for this reason, the happiness of heaven is an *eternal* happiness, and the damnation of hell an *eternal* damnation. And those who refuse to believe in *eternal punishment* argue falsely, and fail to grasp the true and inherent meaning of the words they use.

If at the moment of death our soul is united by love to God, through the grace of Jesus Christ,—if it is in *a state of grace*, thus for ever it must remain, and will consequently retain the possession of God, and of infinite happiness unto all eternity. If, on the contrary, which God forbid, it should be in a state of sin, separated from the love of Jesus Christ, and in fellowship with Satan, it must for ever remain in separation from God, and necessarily in eternal separation from life and light, from happiness and holiness; it must remain under the power of Satan, since it has surrendered itself to him, and it must sink down with him into that unutterable darkness, that eternally living death (that avenging, immutable, and burning abyss of the infinite justice of God (that nameless and immeasurable malediction), which we call hell!

Between hell and paradise there is no middle way. Each one of us must be either saved or lost. If we are saved, we shall be saved by the grace of Jesus Christ, and by our own co-operation with that grace; if we are lost, we shall be lost, in spite of all the efforts of God's love, by our wilful resistance to that love, and through our own fault.

Purgatory is a transitory expiation, an *enforced* penance for those sins which the elect have not sufficiently expiated by a *voluntary* penance whilst on earth. Purgatory is, like hell, a state of remorse and suffering; but purgatory is only a temporal punishment, whilst hell is an eternal punishment.

But as regards heaven or paradise, no human tongue can even tell its secrets. It is the communication of the eternally glorious life of God, of His ineffable light, His immeasurable love, and His infinite beatitude, granted to the Christian for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

O God! how glorious the destiny that opens out before us. How foolish it is to think so little of the life beyond the grave; how gladly we should submit to all earthly trials if our faith were but more fervent.

SECOND PART.

THE SACRAMENTS.

JESUS CHRIST our Lord, the Son of God made man, chose and instituted certain outward signs to transmit His grace to men, and it is these outward signs that Christians call the *sacraments.* Just as God communicated Himself to us, in the mystery of the Incarnation, under a visible form, and by means of that sacred humanity to which He united His own Divine Person, so He continues to unite Himself to our souls under visible forms, and by means of the holy sacraments.

The sacraments are the outward and visible part of religion; they answer the same end as the humanity of Jesus Christ in the Incarnation. They are to the Holy Spirit what the body is to the soul; the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church, and is given to her by the sacraments: they are, therefore, the instruments or outward channels of God's grace, and are to the Church what the bark is to the tree. Jesus Christ instituted them as the necessary means of our sanctification. And, although they are *only* means, we are all obliged to have recourse to them in order to attain true holiness.

The sacraments, we have said, are *outward signs.* An *outward sign* is an external thing which can be grasped or apprehended by the senses, and which signifies some other thing which the senses cannot apprehend. Thus, if I clench my hand, and confront my neighbour, I make use of an *outward sign.* My gesture is *outward,* because it appeals to the sense of sight; and it is a *sign,* because it signifies some-

thing that cannot be seen, namely, the threat I would convey to my neighbour, and the resentment that I feel towards him.

All words are *outward signs;* they are *outward*, because in being heard they affect the sense of hearing; and they are *signs*, because the different sounds which they form express and signify our thoughts, which are invisible, and are hidden in the depths of the mind. The Christian sacraments are all *outward signs;* they may all be apprehended by one or other of the five senses; they consist either of ceremonies, gestures, or words, or of material things, which *signify* and produce an invisible action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the faithful who have recourse to them.

There are seven sacraments, all instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They are—*Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Order, and Matrimony.* They all convey to the soul the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, who comes in order to sanctify it in all the different conditions and various necessities of its spiritual life.

In *Baptism*, Jesus Christ gives us the Holy Spirit, that we may be born to spiritual and eternal life, and may thereby enter into the great family of the elect, which is the Catholic Church. The *outward sign*, which confers upon us the grace of baptism, is the action of the priest who pours water upon the head of the new Christian whilst pronouncing the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In *Confirmation*, Jesus Christ gives us His Holy Spirit to develop within us that life which He gave us in baptism, and to provide us with all the strength that we require in the many trials and combats of the Christian life; the outward sign which confers upon us the grace of confirmation is the action of the bishop who pronounces certain sacred words whilst anointing the foreheads of the faithful with the Holy Chrism.

In *Holy Eucharist*, our Lord Jesus Christ gives Himself, with His humanity, His divinity, and the plenitude of His Spirit, and His abundant graces, under the appearance of bread and wine, constantly to feed and nourish the life of the soul, and to cause it to grow and increase in the midst of all the difficulties of our daily lives. The *outward sign*

in Holy Eucharist is the true body of Jesus Christ, under the appearance of the bread and of the wine which hides His adorable Body.

In *Penance* Jesus Christ gives us the Holy Spirit, whom we have lost through sin, and thus enables us to rise anew to the Christian life. Just as the union of the body with the soul constitutes the life of the body, and just as this life is lost as soon as the soul is separated from the body, even so the union of the soul with the Holy Spirit of Jesus is spiritual and eternal life—the life of the soul ; and this life is lost when sin separates the soul from the Holy Spirit, from Jesus, and from our Heavenly Father. Penance is that means which the infinite mercy of God has provided to restore to us this life when we lose it after baptism. The *outward sign*, which confers upon us the grace of the sacrament of penance, consists in the words spoken by the priest in giving absolution to the penitent who has just confessed his sins.

In *Extreme Unction* Jesus Christ sends us the Holy Spirit to purify us for the last time before we appear at His tribunal, and to sanctify our sufferings, our agony, and death. This is the last mark of His love, as baptism is the first. When God sees it to be expedient for salvation, the Holy Spirit, by Extreme Unction, restores bodily health to the dying. The *outward sign* in this great sacrament is the oil with which the priest anoints the sick on all the organs of the senses whilst pronouncing certain prayers.

Holy Order, which is the sixth sacrament, is the outward sign by means of which Jesus Christ sends down the Holy Spirit upon those whom He deigns to elect from amongst His disciples to be His priests, namely, the dispensers of the sacraments, the ministers of religion, the preachers of the Gospel, and the pastors of the Christian people.

The *outward sign* by which the Holy Spirit comes to bestow this sacred dignity, and to shed His divine grace upon the soul of the Christian who is consecrated to the priestly office, is the imposition of the bishop's hands upon the head of him who is ordained, with many other affecting ceremonies, called by the general name of *Ordination*.

Lastly, in *Matrimony*, our Lord, full of solicitude for our happiness and sanctification in every condition of life, gives to the husband and wife His Holy Spirit to constitute, authorise, and sanctify their union, to endue them with

strength to preserve mutual fidelity and conjugal chastity, and to assist them in the many difficult duties which their common life and the education of their children will in future impose upon them.

The *outward sign* which confers the grace of this sacrament consists in certain ceremonial rites which constitute the alliance of the bride and bridegroom.

The seven sacraments of the Church are therefore *outward signs instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ* as the means of our sanctification. Two amongst them, Baptism and Penance, are destined to give the grace of God to those who have it not, and to those who have lost it. Baptism gives, and Penance *restores*, life to the soul. The five others, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Order, and Matrimony, neither give nor restore spiritual life, but they develop and increase it. It is therefore necessary to be in a *state of grace*—that is to say, not separated from God by any mortal sin, in order to receive the sacraments worthily. If any one received either of these sacraments in a state of mortal sin he would not only forfeit the grace bestowed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart, but would moreover commit a horrible sacrilege, and would trample underfoot the merits of Jesus Christ, from whom all the efficacy of the sacraments spring.

Woe unto him who commits the sin of sacrilege; woe to the unworthy Christian who dares to communicate, or to receive confirmation, or to be married in a state of mortal sin, without having obtained the pardon of his sins by the means of a good confession! The Son of God shall return to him once more, at the day of judgment; and for that unhappy man the greatness of his mercy shall be for ever obliterated in the greatness of His justice.

But, on the other hand, how great is the joy, how inexhaustible the source of consolation for the true Christian who beholds his God ever ready to assist him in all his weak endeavours. He can every day, and at any moment in his life, drink plentifully at these life-giving fountains which are the sources of all grace, and whose "waters," said our Lord Jesus Christ, "spring forth unto everlasting life."

BAPTISM.

:e, as we have just said, seven sacraments in the
religion—that is to say, there are seven rites or
signs chosen by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself
y our souls, by transmitting to them the divine
upply our various spiritual requirements.
e of the soul may be compared to the life of the
. order to grow, to develop, to receive nourishment,
:omplish all its functions, the body must first of
:d with the breath of life. It is the same with
It must first of all receive life by its union with
ist; and if it does not receive this life it can do no
deeds, nor attain true sanctification. Therefore,
s that external ceremony which has been ordained
› give life to the soul, and to enable us to be born
:it, and to become the children of God and of His
For this reason we call Baptism the first and
lamental of the sacraments, without which no one
Christian, or have any part with Jesus Christ.
a is given by taking water and pouring it upon
of the man or child who presents himself to be
ristian, whilst pronouncing the words, "I baptize
ie name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the
ost." In order that the Baptism may be valid, the
:d must be natural water, and the person who
nust pronounce the words just given at the same
he pours the water.
: *of necessity*, any one may, and should baptize,
nan, woman, or child is of no consequence; but
case of necessity, when the child is in imminent
death, and when there is no time to fetch a priest.
iis case of necessity, no one is permitted to admini-
acrament of Baptism; the priest being, by virtue
cred character, the dispenser of holy things, and
ter of religion. Baptism is usually administered
ies, near the entrance, to signify that by baptism
is admitted into the Church, namely, into the great
of Christians, servants of Jesus Christ, and children
Before *pouring* the water, and thus conferring the

sacrament, the priest performs over the child many mystical ceremonies, and recites many prayers of which the object is to implore for the new Christian the divine blessing, to drive away the devil, by whom he is separated from Jesus Christ through the stain of original sin, and symbolise the graces which Baptism is about to confer upon the soul. By the mouth of his godfather, or of his godmother, the child promises to God that he will be faithful to him all his life, and that he will avoid sin to the utmost of his power; and he renounces the devil, vice, and evil works in order to embrace the service of Jesus Christ his Saviour. The godfather and godmother become even as the father and mother of the child in all that relates to the care of his soul, and are henceforth bound by a solemn duty to further his salvation by every means in their power. After the child has been baptized, the priest anoints him on the head with a consecrated oil called Holy Chrism, which is used only in the three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Order.

The priest places in the hands of the newly-made Christian, or rather in the hands of his godfather and godmother, a lighted taper, a striking symbol of what a Christian is, and always should be; for as the light consumes and absorbs the whole taper, causing it to pass away in light, so Jesus Christ becomes, in baptism, the life, the life-giving *light* of Christians, who are on earth only that they may be consumed in love for Him, and in entire devotion to His divine service. If they do but remain faithful, they shall hereafter be admitted into the eternal light and joy of Jesus Christ in heaven, even like the taper, which, as it gradually consumes, becomes nothing else but light.

The day of our baptism is the day of our true birth—that is, of our birth to the true life. For we are not destined to live on earth even like sheep and oxen which have no souls, but are created for the life eternal—are created to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him with an undivided heart all through the probation of this mortal life, that we may thus reach our heavenly home, heirs to the happiness that knows no end.

We must faithfully keep the sacred promises of our baptism, and must take great care in causing them to be observed by those who depend upon us. Children of God, brothers of Jesus Christ, let us prove ourselves worthy of *the grace* bestowed on us in our baptism. To do this, we

must avoid sin, fight against temptation, and be frequent in prayer; we must attend religious instructions (especially on Sundays and on festivals), and constantly observe the commandments of God and the laws of the Church. In one word, we must in all things strive to follow Christ. Earth has nothing more truly great and noble than the Christian whose life does no dishonour to the sacred name he bears.

CONFIRMATION.

BAPTISM is the first sacrament of the Christian religion; *Confirmation* is the second. Confirmation is, in respect to Baptism, just what the development of youth and manhood is to the simple birth. By birth we become men, but we are not men yet in every sense of the term—men capable of speaking, acting, working, and fighting. To become *perfect* men, we must grow and acquire strength, and gradually develop into manhood. So it is with the soul, of which the body is only the symbol and visible image. Our soul is spiritually united to Jesus Christ by baptism, and thus becomes a *living* soul in the sight of God. But the sacrament of Confirmation is needed to develop and bring to perfection the grace given in baptism, and to make the Christian a perfect Christian.

We do not mean by this that all those who are confirmed are perfect; alas! the devil and human weakness ever remain. But in Confirmation, the Christian receives from God all the strength he needs to become and to continue a *perfect* Christian—that is to say, a *saint*.

Our Lord gives us this assistance once for all, and for this reason the sacrament of Confirmation is only received once during life. In the first ages of the Church, Confirmation was generally conferred immediately after baptism; but now it is the custom for children to receive it when they have reached the age of reason, or at least at the time of their first communion; since it is then that the passions first struggle for mastery, and that the true battle of life begins. To neglect wilfully to receive the sacrament of Confirmation at the appointed time, is to be guilty of a great sin; and it is as great a fault in a father or mother not to oblige their children to be *confirm*ed, or still worse, to prevent them.

The bishops alone have received from Jesus Christ the power to confirm. By Confirmation we are, in fact, called to fight valiantly against the devil, the world, and the flesh; and it is the bishops who command the great army of our God. The priests are captains who fight under the orders of their general. In order to confirm, the bishop, wearing his pontifical vestments, commences by imploring for those who present themselves to him the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, and recites certain ancient and admirable prayers. Then each one approaches in his turn, and the bishop traces with the Holy Chrism, upon the forehead of the Christian, the sign of the cross (which is the sign of the great victory won by Jesus Christ), and says, "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Such is the sacramental formula transmitted by the apostles to the bishops their successors. The pontiff then gives the person confirmed a little blow on the cheek, saying, "Peace be with thee." When all have received the sacrament, the bishop concludes the ceremony by asking of God, for His new soldiers, grace to fight manfully with the weapons with which this sacrament has now supplied them; and he then bestows upon all present his solemn benediction. On the day of Confirmation any saint may be chosen as the patron of that new life in which his example and protection will help us to persevere, and we would strongly recommend all children to take the name of *Mary*, and thus place their *perseverance* in holiness under the special protection of the most holy and immaculate Virgin, the Mother of God.

You have doubtless been both baptized and confirmed. Fight courageously against the enemies of your salvation, who are also the enemies of your happiness. Practise all Christian duties with untiring energy; banish from your heart all weakness and baseness and human respect. Remember those striking words of our Saviour, so consoling for the true Christian, so terrible for the unworthy—"He who shall be ashamed of Me before men, of him will I also be ashamed before My Father at the last day. He who perseveres unto the end shall be saved."

HOLY EUCHARIST.

HOLY Eucharist is the third sacrament of the Christian religion. If baptism gives life to the soul by uniting us spiritually to Jesus Christ, if confirmation develop and complete this life-giving union, the Holy Eucharist is destined to preserve and nourish it.

Holy Eucharist is a sacrament instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, and contains our adorable Saviour Himself, under the appearances of bread and wine. The day before His Passion, Jesus Christ took bread into His sacred hands, blessed it, and changed it by His almighty power into His own Body and Blood. "*Take*," said He to His apostles, "*take and eat ye all of this;* FOR THIS IS MY BODY." And when they had communicated, He took a chalice of wine, blessed it in the same manner, and changed it into His precious blood, saying, "*Take and drink ye all of this;* FOR THIS IS MY BLOOD, *the blood of the new and eternal testament, which shall be shed for you and for many, to the remission of sins.*" Then He gave to His apostles, who thus became the first priests, the command and the power to do what He Himself had done, to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. "And you," he added, "as often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me." Ever since that time, the apostles, and their legitimate successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church, have every day, when celebrating Mass, consecrated bread and wine; and it is this bread and wine, miraculously changed into the Body and Blood of our Lord, that we call the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, or the Blessed Sacrament. To communicate is to receive the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, or, in other words, it is to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, really present, though hidden beneath the veils of the sacred Host. This Body is verily the same Body that was once upon this earth, but it is not under the same conditions. In the Holy Eucharist it is in a *glorified condition*, and is thus immeasurably removed from the grossness of the natural and earthly body. To make a good communion, is to receive Jesus Christ with right dispositions; to make a bad communion, *is to receive* Him with evil dispositions. The

first, the noblest, holiest, and most sublime action of which a creature is capable, for it is to unite one's self to God. The last is a terrible sacrilege, by which we betray Jesus Christ, like Judas, with a kiss.

In order to communicate well, it is necessary to be in a state of grace (that is, to have no mortal sin upon the conscience), to be firmly resolved to live as a good Christian, to avoid sin, and to serve God faithfully; and lastly, to prepare for Holy Communion by prayer, spiritual reading, and recollection of heart. It is necessary, moreover, to be fasting, that is, not to have eaten or drunk anything since midnight. This has been commanded by the Church out of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. Every one is obliged, under penalty of grievous sin, to receive the Blessed Sacrament at least once a year, at the festival of Easter; this is what people commonly call their *Easter duties*. To communicate for the first time, is called making the first communion; the time for this great event is, according to custom, the age of eleven, twelve, or thirteen years. But the first communion must not be the last, as some people seem to imagine, thus looking upon the first communion, in their ignorance and sinful indifference, as a kind of enforced task, or conscription, which it is necessary to go through, because such is the universal custom, but which is ended once for all when the ceremony is over. Just as if it were then possible to cease to be a Christian!—as if it were possible, after having been once fed, to go for ever after without food!

Parents are very guilty in the sight of God, when, after the first communion of their children, they estrange them from the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. Such parents rarely escape punishment, even in this world, through the ill conduct of their children.

We may compare the Holy Eucharist, which nourishes the life of the soul, to that material bread which nourishes the life of the body. Food is not life, but it supports life, and if men ceased to eat, they would surely die. In the same manner the Holy Eucharist does not give life to the soul, but it preserves and nourishes that life which it received in baptism. It sustains and cements our union with Jesus Christ, and, by giving us renewed strength for the daily warfare, becomes to us the assured means and certain warrant of our final perseverance. It is a good and holy custom to communicate often, every fortnight for

instance, or even every Sunday, according to each one's spiritual condition, and the advice of his director.

The early Christians communicated every day. No one can communicate too often who communicates well, and all do this who have made a good and careful confession, and who have an earnest desire and a firm resolve to continue faithful to the service of God. There are so many wonderful things to be said of this great and most adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, which enfolds within itself all the love and all the mysteries of God; the little we have just said will suffice, I hope, to renew in each of us the desire to show to Jesus Christ, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, a still greater love and reverence and devotion than we have shown Him hitherto.

FIGURES PROPHETIC OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

CHRIST, the eternal Son of God, appeared to the world, after forty centuries of longing expectation, through the mystery of His Incarnation. Returned to the bosom of His Father, after the thirty-three years of His life on earth, He still dwells amongst us, even unto the end of the world, through the no less adorable mystery of His sacramental presence. The Holy Eucharist does thus, in a manner, recapitulate and continue the mystery of the Incarnation from age to age. Even from the beginning of the world Jesus Christ desired that His patriarchs and prophets should have some knowledge of that Holy Eucharist which He would one day give to men, and with this object He instituted many signs and figures prophetic of this holy mystery.

The first of these was the *tree of life* planted by the Lord in the midst of paradise. The earthly paradise itself represented the Catholic Church; the tree of life was a symbol of Christ, the centre of the Church, and the eternal life of the faithful; the fruit of this mysterious tree was a figure of the Holy Eucharist, the bread of life, destined to preserve and strengthen our faith and holiness and love for God. Adam, in order to remain free from sin, was obliged to eat frequently of the fruit of the tree of life, just as we ourselves are obliged frequently to receive the Holy Eucharist in order to remain faithful to God, and strong to resist Satan.

The second sign prophetic of the Eucharist was the sacrifice of Melchisedech and Abraham. Melchisedech, whom the Scriptures call the priest of the Most High, and king of Jerusalem, presented himself before the holy patriarch, and offered to God a singular sacrifice of bread and wine; after which he was seen no more. Melchisedech is a type of Christ, the King of Heaven, coming to man through the Incarnation, and offering up for him, before His return to the heavenly Jerusalem, the sacrifice of the Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine. Abraham is the type of the true Christian, who, in the fulness of faith, adores Jesus Christ, the eternal Pontiff, the spotless Victim, the sacred Host, immolated upon Calvary for our redemption, and ever dwelling, out of love for us, hidden, in the silence of our tabernacles. The *Paschal Lamb* is another touching prophecy of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus is the Lamb of God, immolated on the cross for the sins of the whole world, and giving His own Body to be the food of Israel, which represents the Church. By the sacrifice of the Mass Jesus renews upon our altars the sacrifice of the cross, and by the Holy Communion He applies to each individual Christian the fruits of His immolation.

But the most striking, perhaps, of all the types prophetic of the Holy Eucharist is the *manna of the desert.* This great miracle continued during forty years. Each year, for forty years, the people of God, to the number of more than two millions of men, received from heaven a miraculous food, a daily bread, symbol of the True Bread come down from heaven, and which is Jesus Christ Himself present in the Blessed Sacrament. The manna was kept in a golden vase in the ark of alliance, in the most holy place of the temple of Jerusalem; the Holy Eucharist is, in the same manner, preserved with love in our Churches, in the hidden places of our sanctuaries, a thousand times more sacred than the holy of holies of the ancient dispensation. Each day, at Mass, this heavenly Bread descends upon the earth, and each one amongst the faithful can, and *should,* go to receive it as his food, and to draw from it the necessary strength to bear with holy patience the fatigue of the journey and the weariness of the desert. Ah! what would the world be like if all Christians went in faith and love to receive communion every day? This earth would then be paradise!

We might give many other figures of the Eucharist re-

corded in the sacred books; amongst others that mysterious bread, brought by an angel to the prophet Elias, which supplied the man of God, after an uninterrupted journey of forty days and forty nights, with strength to reach Mount Horeb, where the glory of the Lord was revealed to him.

Jesus Christ our Saviour thus foreshadowed, during forty centuries, the most precious of all the gifts of His love, the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, which is the food of our souls, the support of our weakness, our joy, our strength, our true life, the pledge of our perseverance, and of our entrance into the glorious paradise which awaits us when our weary pilgrimage is ended.

INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST.

On the evening of Holy Thursday our Lord Jesus Christ first entered upon His Passion, by His institution of the divine Eucharist. He was in a large room in the town of Jerusalem, and He there celebrated the *Last Supper* with His twelve apostles. In order to set us an example of obedience, Jesus, with His disciples, fulfilled in all things the religious laws of Moses. Although the God of Moses, He obeyed in deep humility, thus taking from us all excuse for negligence in the performance of our religious duties. When He had eaten of the paschal lamb, He rose, took a basin filled with water, and having girded Himself with a towel, He knelt humbly before each of His apostles, and washed their feet before He instituted the Blessed Sacrament. By this He desired to give us many lessons; He wished to teach us with what perfect purity of conscience we should approach the holy table; with what charity we should render one to another every possible service; and how even superiors should, for the love of God, abase themselves before their inferiors, and should be full of condescension, treating all men as their brethren. When the Lord had risen, He sat down again at the table, surrounded by His disciples. He took bread, and blessing it, He lifted His eyes to heaven, and said to His apostles, "*Take and eat, for this is My Body;*" then He took a chalice, filled it with wine, blessed it in like manner, and gave to His disciples, saying, "*Take and drink, for this is My Blood, the Blood of*

the new and eternal testament which shall be shed for you, to the remission of sins." And He added, "And you, *as often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me.*"

By these all-powerful words, the Son of God, Creator of the world, changed the bread into His Body, and the wine into His Blood, and gave to His priests the power and the command to do what He had done, and thus to *consecrate* the Most Holy Eucharist. And *this* is what they do, day after day, at the altar, during the sacrifice of the Mass. By the power of God imparted to them, they change the bread and wine into the true Body and true Blood of Jesus Christ; so that in their hands, upon the altar, there remains only the simple *appearance* of bread and wine, concealing from our sight Jesus Christ Himself, there living and there present in *all* the fulness of the divine mysteries, and in the majesty of His eternal glory.

How can this be? This is the secret of God, as impenetrable to angels as to men. We only know that thus it truly is, and this knowledge is all-sufficient for us. We believe the Word of God, and such faith is the highest exercise of reason. The Eucharist is the mystery of faith. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."

ON THE REAL PRESENCE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

The Eucharist is a sacrament (viz., an outward sign), which contains our Lord Jesus Christ living and concealed under the appearances of bread and wine.

The Church teaches us that the bread and wine are changed in the hands of the priest during Mass into the Body and the Blood of Jesus Christ. It is this mysterious bread, Jesus Christ Himself, that Christians call the *Eucharist* or the *Blessed Sacrament*. Behold! how deep a mystery! glorious, unfathomable, and divine! But are we perfectly sure that we are not mistaken? is it a certain fact that Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament? yes, it is *very* certain, *very* sure, and we desire no other proof than the divine words of Jesus Himself.

The more impenetrable this mystery, the more implicit

and absolute the faith required of us by the Son of God, so much the more distinct and unmistakable would have been the teaching that He gave us concerning it. And such that teaching is; and His words on the subject of the real presence are so perfectly plain, so clear and positive, that for three hundred years Protestants have turned and twisted in vain in a useless endeavour to evade the full force and meaning of words they cannot deny. The *evidence* remains, and overwhelms them.

Let them, for instance, open the Gospel. Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks twice of the Holy Eucharist; the first time to *promise* it, about a year before His death; the second time to *institute* it. The promise is related by the apostle St. John, in the sixth chapter of his Gospel. Our Lord was by the Sea of Galilee. He had just miraculously fed five thousand persons with five loaves. Multiplied in the hands of the apostles who distributed them to the people by the command of their Master, these miraculous loaves were a symbol and an acted prophecy of that living bread, far more mysterious, which these same apostles, and the priests, their successors, should be one day charged to distribute to all Christian people. Overcome with admiration at the sight of this great miracle, they said amongst themselves, "This is of a truth the Messias whom we look for." "Labour not," said the Lord to them, "for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you. This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He hath sent. But I have told you already; you have seen me, you have seen my miracles, and yet you do not believe." And when the Jews said to Him that Moses their father had formerly given them manna, a well-known miracle which had proved His divine mission, Jesus answered, "Amen, Amen. Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world." Then the Jews began to murmur, as Protestants and unbelievers murmur still. But Jesus said to them, "Murmur not among yourselves. Amen, Amen. I say unto you, He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread which came down

from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; *and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.*" Then the Jews began to murmur more loudly, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" And they would not believe. But Jesus Christ reaffirmed to them, with still greater power and decision, that He would give them bread which should be His own Body, and His own Blood—bread which should be Himself, and that all must eat this living bread who would be of the number of His disciples. And He did, in a manner, *pledge* Himself to a fulfilment of the words that He had spoken. "Amen, Amen. I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed: He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. This is the bread that came down from heaven. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever." It was impossible to speak more clearly. And yet many who heard Him were still incredulous. "This saying is hard!" they cried; "who can believe it?" And they went away from Jesus just as Protestants go away from Him now, since they also refuse to believe in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic bread, and have allowed themselves to be separated from Him by Luther and Calvin, and others who have joined in the same mad and miserable rebellion. Jesus is not troubled by this defection. Although God has an infinite love for man, He has no need of him, and will never *force* his homage. Then Jesus turned to His apostles —"And you," He asked them sadly—"will you also go away?"

Then it was that St. Peter, throwing himself at His feet, gave heartfelt utterance to those words of faith, obedience, and love, which have ever since been echoed by the Church from generation to generation—"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God!"

Surely this is sufficient to convince all who love the truth and seek it with sincerity. Nevertheless, the words of Jesus Christ, when instituting the Holy Eucharist, are even more formal and distinct than the words with which He promised it.

When such an assertion has been made by Jesus Christ, it is hard to believe that Christians can dare to say that the body of Jesus Christ is not really present in the Eucharist. And yet this is what all Protestants venture to declare.

In Germany there is a striking demonstration of this truth. Our Lord is represented between Luther and Calvin, the two principal founders of Protestantism. Luther pretended that in the Blessed Sacrament there is both the substance of the Bread and the Body of Jesus Christ; Calvin, more daring and more honest, said that Jesus Christ is not there at all, and that the bread is only a symbol of His body. (As if a piece of bread could by any possibility be a symbol and a figure of a living body!) Each of the three here portrayed holds, therefore, in his hands the Eucharistic bread; and these are the different inscriptions which are placed under each. Under Calvin, we read—*This is not my body, but only a symbol of my body.* Under Luther—*This is bread and my body.* And under our Lord—*This is my body.* Then beneath the three—*Which is right?* For my part, notwithstanding Luther and Calvin and some others, I take my stand amidst the ranks of God, and proclaim boldly with the Catholic Church, assembled at the Council of Trent, "I believe and I know that Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. Whoever believes otherwise is not a Christian!"

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

A FEW more words upon this divine subject, the source of all holiness, and the centre of the Christian religion.

From the time of the apostles Christians had always taught and believed that the Eucharist was the true Body of Jesus Christ, hidden under the appearances of the consecrated host. Three hundred years ago, first in Germany, and then in Switzerland, and then in France, certain men sprung up in rebellion against the unanimous belief of fifteen centuries of Christianity, and declared, with unheard-of presumption, that the whole of the Christian world had been hitherto deceived, that they themselves, and they alone, possessed a clearer light and truer knowledge than all the great doctors of Christian antiquity, and that

the Holy Eucharist was *not* the Body of the Lord. They brought forward no proof, no reasonable argument, in support of their new doctrine. They asserted and believed it because such was their good pleasure; and men were to give credence to their teaching because such was their desire, and this they called *liberty of thought.*

But the sun does not cease to shine if a madman deny its existence; and no blasphemy will *alter* the divine institution. Outraged and disowned, mocked and crucified, Jesus, on the day of His Passion, was no less the one true God; outraged and disowned, blasphemed and trampled under foot, the Blessed Sacrament is no less the adorable Body of the Lord.

Jesus is silent, enduring all things from the depths of the tabernacle, even as He was silent, and enduring all things before Caiphas, before Herod, and upon the painful cross —"Come out from the tabernacle, come down from the altar, and we will believe in Thee"—so speak the unbelieving to Jesus veiled in the Blessed Sacrament. "Come down from the Cross if thou art the Son of God, the King of Israel, and we will believe in Thee," cried the blaspheming Pharisees beneath that cross on Calvary. The Protestant who refuses to believe in the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist only because it is a mystery which he cannot comprehend, and therefore chooses to reject, exactly resembles the Pharisee who refused to believe that Jesus was God, only because he could not comprehend how God could be made man.

The apostles and the faithful disciples believed in the divinity of Jesus, although it was not outwardly revealed, only because Jesus affirmed with divine authority that He was truly God, and because He afterwards supported His words by His miracles. Sons of the early Christians, we believe with them the infallible assertion of Jesus whom we know to be the one true God, and when we hear Him say, "*This is My Body,*" we humbly believe that, under the *appearance* of bread, there is really present the Body of our Lord, the Body of God made man; we believe without understanding it, without seeing it; and we are of the number of those whom Jesus Himself proclaimed blessed, when He said to St. Thomas, "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed, blessed are they that have not *seen,* and have believed."

Good sense, far more than learned controversy, should in this case strike at the root of every difficulty. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, said, whilst presenting in peace and love the mysterious Host, "*This is My Body.*" The Protestant says of this same sacred Host, "*This is not the Body of Christ.*" Which should we believe? . . .

What, therefore, does the Catholic Church teach upon this point?

Since St. Peter and the apostles, she has taught simply that which Jesus Christ Himself proclaimed at the Last Supper. She says that the Eucharist is the Body of Jesus Himself, true God and true man, continuing by this mystery of love to dwell amongst us, as a father in the midst of his family, as a king in the midst of his subjects, as the good shepherd in the midst of his flock. She teaches that the Eucharist is a divine and incomprehensible mystery, even as the mystery of the Incarnation is incomprehensible and divine. She condemns, even whilst she pities, those unhappy wanderers from her fold who prefer to rely upon the caprices of feeble human reason, rather than upon the immutable Word of God.

The first who committed the sin of sacrilege, by insulting the Holy Eucharist, was the traitor Judas; and it is said of this miserable man, "It had been better for him if he had not been born."

When we see all faith lost in the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, that mystery which reveals to us most practically the love of Jesus for our souls, we are inspired with the same feeling of sadness and pity which overflowed the heart of Jesus in the Garden of Olives, when He stood face to face with him who first despised the Holy Eucharist! . . . *Amice, ad quid venisti?*—Friend, whereto art thou come?

PENANCE.

THE sacrament of Penance is the medicine of the soul, and it is for this very reason that it is obnoxious to many. The soul, born in misery, by reason of original sin, and con-

stantly drawn to evil by the power of Satan, sometimes succumbs in the constant struggle, loses grace by separating itself from Jesus Christ by sin, and would thus fall into despair, and into hell, were it not for the mercy of God. The sacrament of Penance is the greatest proof of this immeasurable mercy. Baptism unites us to Jesus Christ, and gives life to the soul; Confirmation strengthens this union; Holy Eucharist preserves it; Penance restores it when it has been diminished or destroyed. It is diminished by venial sin, viz., sin of a less serious nature; it is *destroyed* by mortal sin. When we have been so unhappy as to sin grievously, we must not be discouraged, but must have recourse to that remedy which our dear Saviour has, in His loving-kindness, entrusted to the hands of His priests. This remedy is the sacrament of Penance—the pardon which the minister of Jesus Christ gives to the penitent sinner, in the name of God Himself, after the confession or acknowledgment which the sinner makes of all his faults. Jesus Christ instituted this great sacrament of mercy upon Easter Day, by saying to His apostles, in whose midst He had just appeared, risen from the dead, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Ever since that time, Christians have confessed their sins to the priests, successors of the apostles, and have received absolution, or pardon, in the name of Jesus Christ, and through the merits of His cross. Protestants object to confession, and say that it was not instituted by Jesus Christ. But the words of the Saviour are distinct and unmistakeable, and for eighteen hundred years they have been understood and practised just as the Catholic Church understands and practises them to-day.

The true motive which causes men to reject confession is pride, which shrinks from the acknowledgment of wrong-doing and an utter want of that spirit of faith which alone can discern the true evil of sin, and the great excellence of the state of grace. Alas! what bitter regret, and what eternal despair, shall be the portion of those who die in wilful rejection of the truth.

The sacrament of Penance is a judgment. The priest, *the representative* and minister of Jesus Christ, is the judge.

Therefore he is seated as at a tribunal. The guilty person is his own accuser: he presents himself before his judge in the humble posture which is befitting for a sinner; kneeling, with uncovered head, he receives the blessing of the priest, who, although a judge, is also a father, ever ready to comfort and to guide, and then accuses himself of his sins, and excites himself to repentance. If the priest find him sufficiently well disposed, he remits his sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and imposes a penance—that is to say, some work of piety destined to satisfy the justice of God. If he do not find the soul sufficiently well disposed to receive absolution, he simply gives his benediction to the penitent, telling him to return another time better prepared, in order to be absolved. It is the absolution which remits sin; without it, there is no sacrament of Penance, properly so-called; confession and repentance are only the necessary preparation.

It is well to know that the mercy of God will supply all that is wanting when we repent of our sins and desire to confess them, but are absolutely prevented, in a shipwreck for instance, or in battle, or on a journey, or by an unforeseen accident, when no priest is near, and we are threatened by danger of death. We must then have recourse with confidence to Jesus our dear Saviour, who loved us even to the death of the cross, and we must make heartfelt acts of contrition and love, and we must promise to God that we will go to confession as early as possible should we escape this peril; and then we have every reason to hope that our sins will be forgiven us. But for him who *can* confess, there is no other means of being restored to the grace of God; and no repentance can be efficacious without the sacrament of pardon instituted by Jesus Christ.

Every one is bound, under penalty of mortal sin, to go to confession at least once a year, and that at Easter; but it is far better to confess much more frequently. "*Plus on se lave, plus on est propre,*" says the French proverb, which means —the more often we wash, the cleaner we shall be.

If you are not at peace with God, and still more, if your days of holiness and innocence are long since past, take courage, summon all your resolution, seek a priest, tell him that you desire to confess your sins, and that you trust that he

will help you to shake off the bondage in which you have been held. Be assured that you will rejoice to have followed my advice.

THE TWO TRIBUNALS.

AMONGST many Christian truths there is *one* which is revealed to us by reason, as well as by faith; and this is that we must all die and appear before God, who, being justice itself, cannot allow evil to go unpunished, nor righteousness unrewarded. The thought of death and of the judgment of God is a terrible one for all, because we are all sinners, often great sinners; and even the best amongst us is, after all, only the *least wicked*. Therefore, what is there that a sinner should not fear at the hands of infinite justice?

The best of men have been known to tremble at the approach of that supreme moment in which they must be judged, and upon which their whole eternity must depend. One of the richest and most distinguished officers in the court of the Roman emperors, Arsenus by name, renounced whilst still young all worldly advantages in order to serve God better, and to prepare himself solely for a favourable judgment. Nevertheless, when at the point of death, he was seen to weep and tremble. "How! my Father," asked one of the religious who attended on him, "do you fear the judgments of God? Is it not for seventy years that you have done penance?" "Yes, my son," answered the holy old man; "yes, I tremble. What is all our righteousness in the presence of infinite justice? I fear that I may not have merited mercy. I hope, but I fear; I hope for the mercy of God, but I fear because of His justice."

If such have been the feelings of the greatest saints, what should *ours* be, poor miserable sinners, who, from our childhood, have committed a multitude of sins of every description, and have never done penance with all our heart? What shall we say when we come to appear before the tribunal of an infinitely holy God, when all our thoughts, and all our words, and all our actions, and all our omissions, shall rise up before our horror-stricken gaze, even as a thronging array of unanswerable accusers? All the years, all the hours, all the minutes of our life, forgotten

by ourselves, but living and ever present in the sight of God, shall be themselves our sentence? . . . and woe to us if we are condemned! What, then, shall become of us? for we are all sinners, and before the tribunal of divine justice we can only be condemned—condemned eternally!

This inevitable conclusion would lead us to despair, if, besides this tribunal of inflexible justice, Jesus, the Saviour of the world, had not instituted upon earth another tribunal, —a tribunal of mercy and hope. This also is the tribunal of God; but it is the tribunal, the judgment of our Redeemer. He leaves us free to choose between these two tribunals; and he who presents himself willingly to be judged on earth has the infallible promise of God Himself that he shall not be judged in eternity. You have known this tribunal of mercy from your childhood, for it is the tribunal of Penance. The judge chosen by Jesus Christ to pronounce sentence upon the sinner is the priest, the minister of God, and in nothing more than in this can we admire the tenderness of the Good Shepherd for His wandering sheep.

For who and what is the priest to whom Christ has entrusted the right to judge us? He is no sinless angel, but a man like to ourselves, who knows by experience human weakness and misery, who has need himself of pardon and pity, and who has recourse himself to the ministry of another priest to obtain the remission of his sins. Can such a judge inspire us with terror, and are we not assured beforehand, of his commiseration? And then we may choose from amongst many, and seek out the priest in whom we can feel the greatest confidence. If we were forced to travel a hundred leagues to save our soul, by reconciling ourselves to God, what would the transitory fatigues of a journey be, when contrasted with the happiness of eternity? But it is not so; the priest is even at our doors, ever ready, like his divine Master, to receive the penitent sinner. Do we not trample under foot all Christian feeling, and every semblance of good sense, if we refuse to have recourse to so simple a remedy?

And even the shame of this acknowledgment almost entirely disappears, owing to the conditions of the judgment. The law of the most inviolable secrecy closes the lips of the priest, and death itself would not induce him to betray the trust. Blind hatred of religion, in union

with the most absurd ignorance, has alone been able to produce, in journals and mischievous romances, lying accusations, which unfortunately succeed in imposing upon the credulous.

Not only is the judgment secret, but the accuser is no other than the sinner himself, who already knows his faults. We might even add that the priest, too, knows them before the hearing, for all men, alas! resemble each other, and, whatever the nature of our accusations, it is almost certain that our confessor has heard still worse. When the accusation is ended, the judge weighs the sentence; and if the accused sincerely repent, this sentence is infallibly a pardon. And then, how perfect the joy, how perfect the peace, in the heart of the pardoned and purified sinner! He is once more the friend of God; he has heard pronounced over his head that sentence of absolution which God engaged Himself to ratify in heaven when He said to His priests, "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven; and whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them!"

And lastly, there is still one other mark of the divine mercy in the institution of the tribunal of Penance, and that is, that we may gain absolution, not only once during the course of our life (which would be in itself a great mercy), but a hundred times, a thousand times, constantly. Even human weakness should no longer cause us fear, since —provided we sincerely repent of the past, and are earnest in our good resolutions for the future—we are always assured of obtaining pardon and life. Let us then take courage, and return to God our Father; let us confess our sins to His minister with thankfulness and humility, and escape at any price the judgment of divine justice, and the sentence of condemnation which hangs over our head. Since we cannot escape the tribunal of God, let us be so far friends to our own selves as to choose mercy rather than justice, confession rather than hell!

People do not as a rule *like* to confess. This is not hard to understand. People do not generally like medicine, as we have before remarked; and since confession is the remedy for that great and universal malady which we call sin, it would be strange indeed if it were not bitter and disagreeable. Therefore, even after having convinced you of the

divine institution of confession, after having convinced you, not only of its utility, but of its absolute necessity, in order to obtain the pardon of your sins, and to save your soul, I hear you murmuring, "Go to confession! That was all very well when I was a child, when I went to school; but now!"——

Well! and *now?* Is it possible that you have no soul *now?* Have you left your soul at school? If you stood in need of confession when you were young, when the warfare of your passions had scarcely begun, do you not stand far more in need of it, *now* that those passions have grown strong and violent? Does the soldier armed for action throw away his arms when the battle hour arrives? The sole difference between the child and the man, with regard to confession, is, that the man needs it more than the child.

Confession is necessary at every age, because at every age it is necessary to obey the law of God, promulgated by the Catholic Church. And the law of God commands every man, without exception, who is capable of sin, to go to confession. It is necessary at every age, because at all ages men can sin, and at all ages they may die; and confession alone is the divine remedy which cleanses from sin, and holds the soul in readiness to appear before God.

But it is very disagreeable to go to confession!

Alas! yes. We do not urge it as a means of *amusement.* Things that are good and useful are not always amusing. It is not amusing, as I have said, to take medicine when we are ill; and yet we take it in order to be cured. *Duty* is not, as a rule, amusing, but it is good, useful, necessary; and *pleasure* must at all times be subordinate to it.

Thus it is with confession. It is a remedy, and it is a duty—a difficult duty, but most useful and indispensable; a disagreeable remedy, so much the more disagreeable, as it is the more necessary, but still a remedy, and as needful as it is efficacious.

And then, be just. Whose fault is it? Why do you sin? If you did not sin, if you had not given to your soul that mortal sickness which is sin, you would have had no need of this remedy, which is so unpleasant. You must pay the penalty of your own acts, my friend; and since you have sinned you must also confess.

But I have been no worse than others.

I do not say *that* you are worse than others; but that since

you have sinned, just as others sin, you must also confess just as others confess.

But other people do not go to confession.

So much the worse for them if they do not. They *should* go. Must you suffer yourself to die because others are so senseless? When you are ill you call in a doctor quickly, do you not? And yet some people refuse to do so, and die because of their negligence: they are wrong, and you are right in not following their example. And as for your soul, you will surely do at least as much for it as for your body. *Others* should confess, because the command of Jesus Christ is general.

But I should scarcely have anything to say to the priest. I have neither robbed nor murdered. I am well known. I am an honest man.

Well, you will not have to assert yourself to be an honest man, any more than of being a robber or a murderer! But you will accuse yourself of all besides; and there is much, be sure of it. You have neglected a thousand most important duties, beginning with all the duties of the Christian life. You have a thousand times broken that contract of alliance which you signed with God on the day of your baptism. Open the "Daily Companion" for a few moments, or even the Catechism, and in looking through the examination of conscience, you will doubtless find that you are in possession of no trifling burden. You must lay it down, my friend! or you cannot enter paradise; you cannot even enter purgatory; and if you are discovered bearing such a burden you will certainly be lost. Those who guard the gates of heaven can never be deceived.

But I do not know to whom I can go. I am not acquainted with any priest.

But the parish priest is known to you?

I do not like him; and besides, I should not care for my confessor to know me personally. He would have a bad opinion of me.

Indeed! you who had scarcely anything to say! . . . And then, why do you dislike him? Is he not the minister of God, and your own spiritual father? Is he not the kindest and most devoted friend to the poor? Your repugnance is most unjust, and I entreat you to fight against it. But if you still find it is too strong, go to some other priest, to *him in* whom you can feel the greatest confidence. Choose

from amongst those who have the greatest love for the poor. Thank God, good priests are not scarce amongst us.

Cast out from your mind, once for all, the idea that the confessor despises his penitents when they acknowledge serious faults. Nothing is so false as this supposition. The confessor is the messenger of mercy, and of pardon. He pities the sinner, he loves him, he consoles and encourages him, and pardons his sins in the name of Jesus Christ. The priest has too clear a knowledge of human weakness to despise any one.

But I have sinned so deeply.

Your sins are not so great as the mercy of God. God pardons everything to him who repents with his whole heart. And it is this same unlimited power of mercy which He has delegated to His priests. "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Go therefore to confession, my dear friend, if you are so unhappy as to have relinquished the practice of the law of God. Do not content yourself with being an honest man, for God is not contented with *that*, but requires you to be something more. Become a good Christian, a true Catholic. That is, after all, the way to live in peace, to be really happy, and to possess a tranquil and contented spirit. Blessed, says the Gospel, Blessed are the clean of heart!

THE SAFETY-VALVE.

A CERTAIN actress in a large town had a little girl of eleven or twelve years old. The mother, although entirely neglectful of her own religious duties, still remembered that she was a Catholic, and was desirous that her little girl should make her first communion, and that, too, in the best way possible. For this purpose she took her to the house of the Rev. Father M., one of the best and most charitable priests in the town. He received her with a kindness which made a vivid impression upon her, and it was arranged that in a few days the instructions should begin in the presence of the mother.

Shortly after this first interview, Father M., in returning from a visit to a sick person, passed down the street in which his little pupil lived. He rang at the door, and it

was opened by a servant. The priest gave his name, and she requested him to come in, saying that her mistress had given her orders to ask the priest in every time that he might call.

The girl had taken this command literally; so she led the priest into the very room where her mistress was sitting at table with a number of her friends, all actors and actresses feasting merrily. The priest felt decidedly entrapped, and the guests also. He wished to retire at once, giving the mistake of the servant as his excuse; but the mistress of the house pressed him so strongly to remain for a short time, requesting him to do so in the name of the assembled company, and with such evident sincerity, that he felt compelled to remain, and to take a chair for a few moments. The little girl was at the table near to her mother, and by the side of another actress who appeared to be about twenty-three or twenty-four years of age.

Now Father M. was an exceedingly good and clever man, and was not of the number of those who are afraid of sinners. He understood that at this table, and in the midst of so strange a company, there was some good to be done, and that Providence would not have led him here without any purpose. He therefore answered with the utmost civility to the friendly advances of which he was the object, and soon succeeded in gaining the sympathy of the guests. Finding it rather difficult to enter into conversation, he addressed himself to the little girl, and asked her if she were making a good preparation for her first communion. "Yes, Father, I am trying my best," answered the child; "but here is a lady," she added, pointing out the young actress who was sitting next to her, "who has something to tell you, only she is afraid." The actress blushed, and acknowledged, with a shade of embarrassment, that she was desirous of giving the little girl her white dress for her first communion. "That is a very good and kind thought," answered the priest; "but you might," he added gently, "do something better still, if you would but follow this little child in the fulfilment of religious duties." The actress blushed still more deeply. "Unfortunately, that is not possible," she said. "My profession is my only means of living, and it is one which interdicts the practice of religion; besides which, I have never made my first communion; and now I am too old."

"We are never too old to return to God; and at your age it is never impossible to relinquish one profession, and to make choice of some other more in accordance with the Christian life." "*His* reverence is right," said an actor, laughing. "You really had better go to confession." The actress made no answer, and the conversation soon became general. They questioned the priest on the subject of confession, and on the position of actors and actresses with regard to the Church. The talk was not free from the usual lively sallies and ready repartee, but no bitter or unpleasant words were spoken.

The dinner ended, all rose from the table. The windows of the room commanded an extensive view of a beautiful lake. A steamboat was just passing. "See, gentlemen," said the priest, "here is a very clear and simple illustration of the advantage of confession. You see this steamboat. A powerful force puts its machinery into motion, and causes it to advance rapidly; but this force would be, in itself, a danger, an unfailing principle of explosion and destruction, were it not for a certain contrivance which is termed the *safety-valve*. By means of this valve the surplus vapour is thrown off, and both boat and passengers are in safety. So it is with us all. We all possess certain powerful forces, which are our passions; for these forces, for these passions, we need a valve, an opening, without which we are lost. This valve is confession; it is that pure and holy confidence which God has given us for the consolation of our hearts, and the purifying of our consciences. And further, we may remark, how in Protestant and in infidel countries, where confession is unknown, there is far more mental alienation, many more suicides, many more moral accidents, than in those countries where confession is the practice of the people." And the priest developed this theory both forcibly and scientifically, supporting his words by numerous examples.

When at last he rose to go, he left the whole company most pleasantly impressed by the kindness of his manner, and also by the culture of his mind. The young actress accompanied him to the door. "Follow the reverend Father to the church," exclaimed one of the actors, "and make your confession at once; you would be all the better for it." "I do not deny it," answered the young woman seriously; "and I do not know what should prevent me."

And going out with the priest, she followed him to the entrance door. When she was alone with him she began weeping bitterly. "You have saved me," she exclaimed in a voice tremulous with tears. "It was Providence which sent you to this house. I was quite hopeless. Only this evening I had madly resolved to plunge into the lake, and thus to put an end to all the miseries and troubles of my life. Only a few days ago I was hissed on the stage, and I have no wish to act again. This morning I learned that the man to whom I was to have been married has engaged himself to another. I had no resources, no friend on earth, and I longed to die. But now I repent—I will confess my sins—I will confess at once." The priest gently calmed the poor girl, and encouraged her in her good purpose. He added some few words of Christian counsel to those which he had spoken in the hearing of every one, and the young woman appointed a certain hour the next day in which she would come to confession.

Through an energetic determination, she became a good and fervent Christian. She has left the theatre, and has undertaken the care of her friend's little girl, and now they are both comfortably settled in a large town, where they are able to gain a livelihood in a modest but honourable position.

To all who read this, and who do not practise their Christian duties, I would say, as our Lord said in His Gospel, "Go, and do the same!"

PASTOR ATGER, AND CONFESSION.

In June 1858, I was constantly meeting at Paris a very worthy man named Francis Atger; he was about forty-five years of age, and had exercised for twenty years the profession of a Protestant pastor. He had been for some time pastor at Pont-de-Montvert, in the Cevennes. He was a clever man, upright and honourable, and sincerely religious. For a long time his different colleagues had been in the habit of laughing at his sympathy with Catholic institutions, and had given him the name of the *canon*.

This poor man first wrote to me, and afterwards spoke openly to me of his great uncertainty with regard to the truth, and of his growing antipathy to the doctrinal anarchy of the various Protestant sects; and in the end he did not fail to recognise the only way which leads through truth to life. "My decision is made;—I am a Catholic," he said, when leaving me. "I am going to arrange my family affairs, and then I will return with my two sons and my poor wife, if she consent to follow me." He was never able to return; first his affairs, and afterwards his health, detained him in the mountains, where he died some months ago. Notwithstanding the violent opposition which pursued him even up to his last moments, he was able, I have been informed, to confess to the venerable curé Pont-de-Montvert, to abjure upon his deathbed the heresy of Calvin, and to appear "having on a wedding garment" at the tribunal of the eternal Bridegroom of the Church.

He related to me, during the course of our discussions and confidential talks, the two following incidents which had happened to himself, and had helped to prove to him the religious excellence of confession:—

"Some years ago," he said, "I was engaged in mission, and was riding to a little town at which I was to preach. I carried behind me at the horse's saddle a small portmanteau, which contained, amongst other things, a rather large sum of money—more than seven hundred francs. Some clever thief, by cutting the straps of this portmanteau, contrived to rob me with such dexterity that I have never been able to discover where or how it was done. A singular idea instantly presented itself to my mind. 'The country through which I am passing,' I thought, 'is chiefly Catholic; if the thief only happen to be a Catholic by birth, and should go sooner or later to confession, I have some hope of recovering my property.' I could scarcely refrain from laughing at myself for building upon such a wild probability, and yet it often recurred to my mind. . . . A few weeks after the Paschal season, what was my surprise, and at the same time, my thankfulness, to receive a letter from the priest of the place in which I had been robbed, informing me that I could recover at his house the exact sum which I had lost. 'Some one owes it to you,' he

wrote, 'and I am charged to restore it.' Another time I was robbed in another village which was entirely Protestant. 'There is no hope for me this time,' I said to my wife. 'There are no Catholics here,' and in fact my money never returned to me."

I received these curious details from the very lips of the pastor himself.

EXTREME UNCTION.

THIS name alone is sufficient to fill the mind with sad, although serious and salutary, thoughts. We must all one day die, and Extreme Unction is the sacrament of the dying. In order to receive it well when our last hour comes, we should have a clear knowledge of this great sacrament, and should rightly understand the object of its institution, and the marvellous effects which it is destined to work upon the soul. Death is *not* the end of all things, as some few people, with a certain anomalous order of intelligence, will venture to assert. Death is, on the contrary, the *beginning* of the true life of that unchanging and eternal life, for which our transient human life is but the preparation. There is a close analogy between our spiritual life on earth and the life of the little infant yet unborn; because, by union with its mother, the child possesses indeed the germ of life, and yet it does not *live*, properly speaking, until the moment of its birth, and of its entrance into this world. Such is the present life contrasted with the life eternal.

By our union with Jesus Christ we possess the germ of that holy and eternal life into which we shall soon enter, and the moment of our death will be the commencement of that glorious life for which God has created us. Death, therefore, is nothing but a birth, a transition, a day to be infinitely welcomed and desired, by all who are true Christians and true servants of God. But, alas! however holy our desires, we are still poor sinners, very weak, and very liable to err; and we might well be tempted to despair at the thought of the infinite holiness, and to shrink at the thought of the terrible judgment, of Jesus Christ our God. He who, whilst on earth, revealed Himself to us only

as a God of mercy and compassion, instituted this sacrament of Extreme Unction, in order to calm and comfort our last moments, and to grant us one last union with our Saviour, who thus applies to us, by the ministry of the priest, the merits of His Passion and His death.

Jesus Christ, our Judge, comes thus to us Himself to reassure, to cover us with His sacred Blood, and to prepare us, by this supreme sanctification, to appear at His tribunal. The secondary object of the sacrament of Extreme Unction is to restore health to the body, if a prolonged life be necessary to the salvation of the soul. It is the height of foolishness to be afraid of Extreme Unction, and to imagine that it can cause death to the sick. Christians never have such wrong ideas; but as soon as they are seized by dangerous sickness, they seek their safeguard, and ask themselves for that sacrament which Jesus Christ has instituted for them, being well assured that they will receive from it great blessings for the soul, and also, if it be the will of God, a power of healing for the body.

Extreme Unction is administered by means of holy oil, consecrated by the bishops on Holy Thursday, and called the Oil of the Infirm. Our Lord instituted this sacrament just as He instituted all the rest; and the apostle St. James, in an Epistle which he addressed to the early Christians, reminds them of this unction for the dying, and charges them to call in the priests to administer it in all cases of serious illness.

The priest first recites, over the sick person, some preparatory prayers; then he makes, with the holy oil, different unctions, in the form of a cross, upon the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the lips, the hands, and the feet of the sick person, saying at each anointing, "*May the Lord by this holy anointing, and by His own most tender mercy, pardon thee whatever sin thou hast committed by thy sight, hearing,*" or by the other senses. And our Lord applies successively to the sick person, by the outward sign of these anointings, the merits of His life and of His death, and purifies each one of the senses of the dying. At the time of receiving Extreme Unction, it is the custom to receive also the Holy Viaticum—that is, to communicate for the last time. Holy Communion, when received as Viaticum, is distinguished by this particular, that it is not necessary to be fasting to receive the Body of Jesus Christ.

After the Viaticum and Extreme Unction, the sick person

should be left to commune in silence with God; or it would be even better to help him to profit by the two sacraments which he has just received, by suggesting to him from time to time some holy thought, and speaking some few simple words of prayer, such as these: "My God, how merciful Thou art, I love and thank Thee!—Jesus, my Saviour, all my hopes are in Thee, and I love Thee with my whole heart!—O holy Virgin Mary, Mother of my Saviour, I place myself under thy protection; pray for me, a sinner!"

And thus the Christian soul shall be at peace, happy and resigned, even in the midst of bodily pains; and thus the love of God shall transform the natural horrors of the last agony and death into a calm sweet hope, a patient waiting for the life that lies beyond the portals of the grave.

THE FEAR OF EXTREME UNCTION.

CAN you imagine that there are in the world people so foolish as to believe that there is nothing so dangerous for a sick person as to allow him to see a priest—as if the priest were not the messenger of God, charged to comfort those who suffer, to pardon sins, to drive away remorse, and to restore to the soul the best and sweetest possessions humanity knows—peace and hope! Alas! how blind are the people of whom I speak, and they are not a few. For the body they spare nothing. They are not afraid of frightening the sick person by the doctor's frequent visits, or by serious consultations, although these things cannot fail to warn him that he is in danger; and not only this, they do much more—they force upon him one remedy after another; they insist, they entreat, they weary him on the subject of his health; they spare no expense; they shrink from no difficulty, no suffering.

Now go and say to them, "Take care, your friend is growing suspicious; he is beginning to feel alarmed. You must be careful to create no painful impression upon his mind; it might possibly cause or hasten his death; wait until he is worse." How quickly they would answer that the first thing to be thought of was to save his life, and *that that* was the one thing they must endeavour to do,

even at the risk of frightening him, and of doing him some temporary harm! And they would be perfectly and unquestionably right.

But for the unhappy soul it is a different matter: and yet it is often far more diseased than the body. Perhaps for many years it has abandoned its service to God, and forgotten its eternity.

The priest is the physician sent by Jesus Christ to cure and save it. And yet there seems to be but *one* fear, *one* dread—to see the priest approach the sick. It is delayed until the very last minute. "It would have such a dangerous effect upon him," they say. "To speak to any one so ill about confession and extreme unction is quite sufficient to kill him at once! We must wait until he is past feeling or knowing much about it—all in good time!"

Very admirable prudence, indeed! Call in the doctor when the sick man is in the agony of death; call in the confessor when he is no longer able to confess; call in the priest when his presence is utterly useless. There is something to be done that would give you still less trouble; simply this—do not call in the priest at all, proclaim openly that you trouble yourselves neither about God nor about eternity, then, let your dying *die*—like dogs!

What is the meaning of such unworthy conduct? What is the meaning of such cruelty, such irreligion? Could any words be sufficiently forcible to blight the fatal prejudice which has lost, still loses, and will again lose, so many miserable souls?

The experience of every day is sufficient to prove its falsity, but all this counts for nothing; the sick are constantly seen to weep for joy after having received the last consolations of religion, but still in vain; and still we see whole families, pretending to be Christians, join in a kind of league against the priest, to prevent him from saving the soul of a father, mother, child, or friend, and from preparing that soul to appear before the judgment seat of God! And then, when it is too late, and the priest justly reproaches the deluded family, "He was so good!" they say. "He was such an upright, honourable man!" "She was such a virtuous woman!" "He led an irreproachable life!" "She loved her children so much!" "There is nothing to fear!" . . . And perhaps for ten or twenty years

the unhappy dead had forgotten Jesus Christ, and neglected the most essential duties of the Christian life!

No, no; understand this, once for all, and tell it to the whole world: the dying, *themselves*, have no fear of the priest! His visit *never* kills them! On the contrary, it saves them! if they must die, it saves their soul! and if their sickness is not mortal, it comforts and strengthens them as nothing else could do.

This is our daily experience, and a thousand instances might be quoted to prove its truth. Some may remember the frightful accident that happened in 1842 on the railroad between Paris and Versailles. The passenger train was overturned, and the whole of the carriages were shattered in pieces and dashed one upon another. A few instants after this terrible accident nothing was to be seen but a confused heap of broken carriages and mangled bodies, all drenched with the boiling water from the engine, and covered with burning coals which were rapidly reduced to ashes. In the first carriages some few persons alone escaped from this frightful disaster. These unfortunate people were dragged out with much difficulty from the midst of the burning rubbish. Five or six priests, professors and directors of the seminary of Issy, which is close to the railroad, passed the night in rendering the most devoted services to the victims. One amongst them related to me, how when the night was nearly over, and he was preparing to return to the seminary, a man came to inform him that a young pupil of the *Ecole Polytechnique* had been just received into a large house which he pointed out, and had been so severely burnt that his life could not possibly be saved. The priest turned his steps immediately in the direction of this house. He requested the servants to say that he wished to speak to the master of the house. A lady instantly came forward to speak to him. He explained how he had just heard that she had had the charity to receive into her house one of the victims of that night's accident, and asked if there were any chance of saving his life. The lady hesitated, and made many difficulties, but the priest insisted: she acknowledged that the unfortunate youth appeared to be at the point of death; but added immediately that she *could not* take upon herself the responsibility of allowing *him to* see a priest, as it would be too great a shock, and

might possibly kill him, &c, and all the stereotyped excuses, exactly as we have described. But the priest, conscious only of a soul to be saved, urged his request with renewed energy, until at last the lady consented, with a very ill grace, to ask the youth if he desired to see a priest.

After a few moments he was requested to go in. "Scarcely had I appeared at the threshold of the door," he said to me, "when I saw the poor youth raise himself with difficulty from his bed of suffering and stretch out his hand to me. I drew near. It was a horrible sight. He was so frightfully burnt, so terribly swollen and disfigured, that not a single feature could be distinguished. He was suffering a martyrdom of pain. The lady of the house had remarked the movement that he had made on first seeing me, and I could perceive that she herself, and those who were assisting, were very much surprised.

"My child," I said at once to the poor young man, without being in the least disturbed by the presence of those who were in the room, "I am come to receive your confession, to bring you the pardon of God, and peace to your soul." He clasped his hands with an indescribable expression of happiness. Although perfectly conscious, he was not able to speak. I sent every one away. I agreed with the unfortunate young man that he should press my hand in answer to the questions that I was about to ask him; and in this manner I received his confession. . . .

"When it was ended I recalled the mistress of the house, and those persons who were helping her in nursing the sufferer; and I then profited by this occasion to point out to them how culpable, and how utterly unfounded, was the prejudice which had urged them to oppose my wishes; and they were unable to make any reply. I then sent for the holy viaticum and extreme unction. The dying youth received these last tokens of God's mercy and love with a devotion which drew tears from all who witnessed it, and two hours after, his soul, reconciled to God, entered into eternity."

Was the young soldier afraid of the priest? and were not those who repulsed him grievously mistaken?

One other fact. Nothing is so powerful as facts. On a certain Shrove Tuesday some years ago, I was myself called in to a sick child whose life had been given up by the physician. The poor mother had no hope. Those

signs which are the constant forerunners of death were already stamped upon the face of her little one. I gave him the last sacraments, heard his confession, and administered to him, as viaticum, his first communion . . . his first and last, alas! they said. The child lay with his little hand clasped together during this sad and touching ceremony, and when I asked him if he were happy, he exerted all his feeble strength to answer with a smile, "Yes, father, . . . very . . . happy." I comforted the poor mother to the best of my power, pressed a farewell kiss on the pallid forehead of the child, and left him, never hoping to see him again. . . .

The following day the doctor was surprised to find his patient still living. But what was his bewilderment, when, upon a closer examination, he discovered that the fever had entirely disappeared, as well as all the symptoms of death which he had noticed the day before. It was inexplicable. Three days after, the little one, recalled to life, was playing with his brother. Had extreme unction and holy viaticum caused the child to die?

Then dismiss from your mind, henceforth, these foolish prejudices, both on your own account, and that of others. Do not fear the priest in sickness more than in health. When you are rather seriously ill, send for him at first; seek the consolations of religion, and try to induce all who are sick to do the same. Be in readiness for anything that may happen, and make your peace with God. Those who have procured a passport are not *forced* to start upon a journey.

HOLY ORDER.

Holy Order is the sacrament instituted by the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, for the consecration or ordination of priests.

Although you may not be a priest, it will not be useless to devote some few moments to speaking of the sacraments of Holy Order, and of the priesthood, to the end that you may have a truer knowledge of what your priests really are, and may feel how deeply you should reverence their *sacred calling*, and with how great a confidence you should

seek from their holy ministry all the help you need to know and to practise the law of God, to live a Christian life, and to save your own soul.

Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Priest, that is to say, the Sovereign Mediator between God and man, and the Sovereign Sanctifier of the world. Jesus Christ came down to earth to teach men the knowledge of the one true God; to teach men religion, the one true religion, and to give them the means to avoid sin, to save their souls, and to attain to everlasting life.

Before leaving this world He chose twelve disciples, whom He named Apostles, or envoys, and to them He communicated the great mission which He had received from His heavenly Father. "As the Father hath sent Me," He said to them, "I also send you. All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

The apostles were therefore the first ministers of Jesus Christ. They, in their turn, consecrated other bishops and other priests in all those countries through which they journeyed preaching the Gospel; and thus our own bishops and priests descend, by an uninterrupted succession, from the apostles and from Jesus Christ Himself, in whose power they likewise participate. And it is for this reason that we owe them an infinite reverence, since in their person we reverence Jesus Christ Himself. If sometimes they are not as perfect as their sacred vocation demands, we must remember that although they are priests, they are still men, and are consequently subject to err like other men. By the grace of God, it is rare to see a priest fail grievously in his duties; and, as a rule, it is calumny alone which levels its attacks against the priesthood.

The sacrament of Holy Order, by which priests are ordained, is conferred by the Bishop alone. The Bishop is as the spiritual father of priests, and of all the faithful; and priests, who are in their turn the spiritual fathers of Christians, are like to the eldest sons of the Bishop.

Nothing is more solemn and more imposing than an

ordination. This is the name given to that ceremony by which the Bishop confers the sacrament of Holy Order; the priesthood is not immediately attained; the Church, in her wisdom, requires many years of preparation from those who are destined to the sacred ministry. She initiates them little by little in the knowledge and the virtues of their holy calling, and requires them to pass through many grades, of which the deaconry and sub-deaconry are the principal.

Young men are sub-deacons only until the age of twenty-one, after which they are irrevocably engaged in the service of God by the vow of perpetual chastity. No one can be a priest until the age of twenty-four, nor a Bishop until thirty years of age.

The principal function of the priest is to pray to God in the name of all men, and to offer to Him the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which is called the Mass. The *breviary* or *divine office* is that daily prayer to which all priests are bound, and which they recite, not only on their own account, but in the name of all Christians and of the whole world. Thence they draw that holiness, charity, and self-devotion which they need, in order to fulfil efficaciously the second of their duties, viz., the sanctification of souls. For it is to sanctify and to save men that priests, in the name of Jesus Christ, teach religion, make known to all the law of God, administer the sacraments, remit sins, and fulfil all other offices of the sacerdotal ministry. He that heareth them, heareth Jesus Christ; he that rejects them, rejects salvation and eternal life.

Let us pray to God to send us good priests. A good priest is like Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ, the saviour and benefactor of all who approach him. The sacrament of Holy Order is thus useful to ourselves; and it is through this sacrament that we have the knowledge of God, and are able to practise His holy law, and that we are not deprived, like so many unhappy souls, of the light and the peace of the true religion.

THE PRIEST.

THERE is in the midst of us a man little appreciated, too often little loved, and sometimes frightfully calumniated, and yet who is, nevertheless, just the one man who is most worthy of the reverence and confidence of all. This man is the Christian priest—the consoler of all who suffer, and the friend of all the friendless;—and it is against *him* that the scoffing and the irreligious, enemies of God and of society, constantly endeavour to prejudice the minds of men.

The priest is attacked in this manner only because he is the minister of God. The man who would have no God, would also have no priest; and, knowing that he is powerless to impose silence upon this inconvenient preacher of the Divine law, he seeks to expel him, or at least to rob him of the confidence of men in order to paralyse his ministry.

The priest has been sent to his brethren by Jesus Christ, even as He Himself was sent. "Even as My Father hath sent Me," said Jesus to the apostles, His first priests, "I also send you!" Jesus was sent to save the world by the sacrifice of Himself, to enlighten it by His teaching, and to console it by His mercy. And thus He sends His priests to save, instruct, console, and sanctify their brethren; or rather, He Himself fulfils, by means of His priests, His Divine and beneficent mission, speaking by their mouth, and developing by their sacred ministry His Divine life in the midst of men. Ministers of God though they are, priests are however *men*. Therefore they are not perfect. Still more, they can, if forgetful of their holy vocation, fall like the rest of us into serious faults; but their priestly character is no less worthy of our reverence; and we should always carefully distinguish between the man and the priest. Weakness and error are proper to man, and we must condemn them in the priest as in all other men; but the ministry of souls, the duty of teaching the law of God, the power of administering holy things, of celebrating Mass, of absolving from sin, in one word, the priesthood, are proper to the priest, as the representative of God, and are *independent of the* virtue or the negligence of him

who holds this sacred trust. We should not forget that there was one Judas amongst the twelve apostles; and when we reflect on human weakness, we have reason to thank God that there are so few priests forgetful of their duties, and unworthy of their vocation.

Let men say what they please; there is one fact, which is perfectly apparent and perfectly undeniable. Our priests are, as a rule, notwithstanding the many imperfections imputed to them, and which are almost always greatly exaggerated, far better than other men. They are more charitable to the unfortunate, they lead a purer life—a more virtuous life, a life more in conformity with the law of God—than are the lives of those who surround them, and who often cry out most loudly against them. In fact, how can their life be defined if not as a life of self-devotion and of good works?

By teaching our children to fear God, to love Him, and to serve Him, do they not constitute themselves the most effectual, the *only* effectual, guardians of the innocence and virtue of our names? Where is the father or mother who could be unwilling for the priest to tell his child to be pure, to shrink from evil, to be dutiful and obedient, to fulfil his duties, and to pray to God—in one word, to be a Christian? Where is the man who could fear to have such counsel given to his wife? And is it not pure wickedness to call so salutary an influence intrigue, and scheming, and intermeddling in family secrets?

People sometimes complain that the priest lives like a gloomy recluse, shut out from society. But whose fault is this? Is it not the fault of society itself, which by listening to false insinuations builds up a wall of separation against the priest? And then, men of the world, so indulgent, so forbearing to themselves, when pronouncing their strictures on the priest, become suddenly transformed into the most severe and rigorous of mankind. Let him do what he will, they are never at a loss for something to condemn. If he is genial, conversational, and at ease in society, they say he is fond of the world, and has mistaken his vocation; if, on the contrary, he is grave and reserved, they call him a bear, and pronounce him insufferable.

What is the minister of God to do in the midst of such extremes? He must do exactly what he does—he must *patiently* endure the foolish and contradictory accusations from which he has to suffer; he must do the right, as in

the sight of God; he must give to the world the light of a pure example, and save the souls of men by a life of true self-sacrifice.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL VOCATION.

THE word *vocation* means simply *calling*. Those who are called by God to the ecclesiastical state have a vocation; those who are not called have no vocation, and should not become priests.

A vocation, as a rule, consists in the possession of certain qualities, dispositions, aptitudes, tastes, and inclinations, which render a man fit to follow one career rather than another. Thus men have vocations for the army, the navy, law, or commerce. All good and lawful vocations come from God, and lead to Him; they lead to Him because they are good; they come from Him because it is He who gives us, as our Creator, those dispositions, qualities, and lawful desires which, altogether, constitute our vocation.

Every man has a vocation here below; every man is destined to fill some place, more or less distinctive, in the midst of his fellowmen, and is destined, moreover, by a faithful fulfilment of the will of God in this place, to save his soul and attain to heaven. There are different vocations, just as there are different temperaments and constitutions. Those who would be well must first understand their constitution, and then take that care of their health which they feel that they need; just in the same way, those who would make the best of life should first discover and understand their particular vocation; hence, it is most important to study and examine seriously the groundwork of the individual mind and character. This study is one of the most binding duties of parents with regard to their children, and of priests towards the penitents whom they direct, and, lastly, it is the duty which we all owe to ourselves when we arrive at the age in which we become truly responsible for our actions, and for the whole course of our future lives.

To each particular vocation God attaches *special graces*, which are only bestowed on those who seek to learn, and faithfully follow, their vocation, which, consequently, be-

comes a duty of the highest importance, since it tends to eternal salvation.

The holiest, the noblest, the most Divine of all vocations is the vocation to the priesthood. This truly consists of certain dispositions of the heart and mind, of certain qualities and inclinations which indicate that a child or a man will at some future day be fitted to fill worthily the priestly office. This vocation comes from God more directly than any other, since our Lord alone, by the powerful attraction of His grace, can fill the heart of a young man with the earnest desire to consecrate himself to the Divine service, and to embrace that holy routine of prayer, and sacrifice, and self-devotion which constitutes the life of the true priest.

As regards *mental capabilities*, it is necessary that a young man, to be truly called to the priesthood, should possess a clear judgment, upright and equitable principles, and an intelligence which is, at least, *equal* to the average; in short, he must be capable of earnest, persevering study. If a priest possess a large amount of talent and intellect, it is all the better, but that is only desirable, and not indispensable.

As regards *disposition*, it is necessary to be kind, compassionate, and capable of self-denial in order to become a priest. A priest without such virtues would be as a body without life, as a fire which gives no heat. A selfish, unamiable child, however bright and intelligent, is not fitted to be a priest.

As regards *character*, a very important point and one which is often overlooked, it is necessary that a young man who desires to become a priest should begin by vigorously fighting against, and effectually overcoming, certain grave defects of character which render even a virtuous man obnoxious to his neighbours. What future good is likely to be done in the priestly office by an irritable, capricious, or eccentric man, or by a weak, melancholy, indolent man; or, again, by a man who has only base and shallow ideas, and is utterly destitute of anything like real elevation of thought and feeling? or, lastly, by a heedless, thoughtless man, loquacious, fickle, and inconsistent. Such characteristics as these are little in accordance with the sacred garb and calling of the priest.

Mind, and heart, and character: such is the triple point

of view from which the idea of a religious vocation should, from the first, be regarded.

There are certain outward circumstances which should also be taken into account, because they are very important, and sometimes absolutely essential: amongst others, *appearance, family, antecedents,* and *means.*

Appearance; because, whilst it is not in the least necessary that a priest should be handsome, it is quite necessary that he should be neither ridiculous, nor deformed. Therefore, even with sufficient means, a good disposition, and a faultless character, a child or a man who had a prominent hump, a grotesque figure, or any striking disfigurement, would be for that reason alone disqualified for the priesthood. Health is a serious obstacle only when it would prevent study, or render any one unable to perform the essential duties of the holy ministry. *Family* may also exclude a vocation: thus, a name justly dishonoured, relations justly disgraced, form as a rule an almost invincible obstacle. It is the same with regard to *antecedents;* a liberated convict, a thief from a prison, may never dream of becoming a priest. If any one had been so unhappy as to lead a wicked life, and to give scandal, it would be quite necessary to efface the very memory of the past by years of penitence and by a holy Christian life, before daring to assume the robe of an ecclesiastic; and, lastly, *means;* pecuniary difficulties may be almost always overcome, if the vocation be, in all other respects, clear and unquestionable. Sometimes, however, extreme poverty may oblige a young man to renounce his desire for the priesthood, in order to support his family, and to provide himself with the simple necessaries of life.

Those who have good reason to believe that they have a religious vocation should submit the decision of this grave question to the examination and the judgment of an enlightened confessor, and, except in very exceptional cases, the best thing to do is to render a willing obedience.

Parents should act with the greatest circumspection in regard to their children upon this subject of a vocation. There are two extremes to avoid—never to interfere with a real vocation, and never to urge a child indiscretely into a life for which he is not intended. In either case they would be guilty of a great sin. They are certainly permitted, and indeed it is their duty, to give much thought

to the vocation of their children, and to discuss it seriously with the priest who directs them, and to gain all possible help and security; but any definite decision on this subject is entirely beyond their power, and it is the Church alone who can declare whether there is, or is not, a vocation.

Sometimes the evident signs of a vocation show themselves very early in life. There are priests who can never remember having had any other desire than that of consecrating themselves to the service of God. But in other cases, the Divine call is not heard until later in life, at the time of the first communion, for instance, or upon the occasion of some great grief; or at the age of eighteen or twenty, in the midst of the pleasures of the world; or later still, and owing to apparently casual and trifling circumstances, which it would be impossible to enumerate, and of which the secret belongs to God alone. Usually, however, a vocation manifests itself in youth, or, at least, in early manhood.

A vocation may be lost: it should therefore be cultivated, preserved, developed, and strengthened with extreme vigilance. A blow from a stone or a stick is sometimes sufficient to break the branch of a fruit tree, and to prevent it for ever from following ITS *vocation*, which was to bear one day both flowers and fruit: thus we have seen dawning vocations, of a very decided nature, entirely disappear by reason of one single serious infidelity. At other times, strange and inexplicable as it is, we have seen vocations resist every shock and every possible blow; like plants which we are startled to find living beneath ruins which seem ready to stifle and crush out their life.

What should be done to preserve a vocation, and to strengthen it in the heart? To begin with, all manner of sin should be avoided as much as possible; also worldly pleasures, frivolous books, worthless and dissipated society; an endeavour should be made to live amidst good influences and with those whose character and example would have only a salutary effect, to pray very much, to have much love for the Blessed Sacrament, which is the one central attraction in the life of the priest, to communicate as often as possible; and lastly, to work well in order to be admitted without too much delay into the seminary, that special asylum of vocations to the priesthood.

The confessor and the parents of a youthful candidate

for the sacred ministry should endeavour to lead him in the safe and narrow way here pointed out by every means in their power.

It is a great happiness and grace for any family to give a priest to God. It is a higher honour than that of royalty; the priest is the king of souls, the true father of the people, the guardian of truth and justice upon earth; anointed of God. Blessed is the child whom the Lord deigns to call to the priestly office. Blessed is the family of the little elect. Let him choose without fear the better part. It is the most sublime, and the sweetest; it is the most Divine, and the simplest; thus, where responsibilities abound, graces also abound, and this vocation to a more perfect life is, essentially, only a vocation to a nobler, truer, purer happiness; it is the mark of a more tender love.

MATRIMONY.

MATRIMONY is a contract instituted by God from the beginning of the world, by which a man and woman give themselves freely and irrevocably to each other as husband and wife. Matrimony is therefore a sacred and a religious contract, and is of a far higher nature than any *other* contract common amongst men. It is irrevocable when a free consent has been once given upon both sides; it is beyond recall, and the union is for life.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to sanctify the world in order to save it, did not forget marriage, the foundation of human society and the basis of family life. This contract, already holy and sacred, was raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. Therefore, amongst Christians, marriage is an essentially religious act, a source of grace and sanctification for the faithful husband and wife, and its violation is not only an injustice, but an undoubted sacrilege.

In the eyes of Christians and of the Church there is but one true and legitimate marriage, that which is contracted according to the law of God, in the presence of God's minister, and in obedience to the rules laid down by the Church.

A civil *marriage is no* marriage in the sense of the

Divine contract which unites a man and woman; it is only a formality which is entirely insufficient to bind the husband and wife in the sight of God; and its effects are only civil and exterior.

A marriage, to be valid, must be contracted in the presence of the parish priest and of two witnesses. When the persons presenting themselves to be married have been interrogated by the priest as to their free and voluntary consent to take each other mutually for husband and wife, and have both answered in the affirmative, they are for ever united, they have received the sacrament of matrimony, and commit a mortal sin if their hearts are not prepared for this solemn religious act.

In order to receive this sacrament aright, it is necessary to prepare for it by prayer and by a good confession; and in many countries the faithful are not only exhorted, but are commanded to receive the holy communion before marriage. It is best to make this preparation in good time, and not to wait until the very day of marriage before fulfilling this important duty. In large towns where there are so many workmen who are both indifferent and ignorant with regard to religion, this culpable negligence is not uncommon; and if there are many miserable homes, it is greatly to this want of preparation that we must attribute the curse which seems to rest upon them.

Are you married? Make your home a happy one, and to do this be a Christian. Bear patiently with the faults and imperfections of your wife; and, wives, bear patiently with the imperfections of your husbands. Be sure that God reserves for you much joy and happiness in your union, and that He has raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament only to render it a source of grace and benediction. If He send you children, bring them up in the knowledge and practice of religion; teach them by example before teaching them by words, and live in such manner in their sight that you may never need to *teach* them to honour and to love you. Let your family be a model of order, peace, and virtue; this, believe me, is the surest and simplest means of acquiring lasting happiness.

BEFORE MARRIAGE.

It is a very serious thing to marry. To a great many people marriage resembles a kind of perpetual treadmill; they are in despair at the dreary prospect of being for ever bound to one another; they tear their hair (figuratively speaking), and would give the whole world to be able to recall the fatal *Yes*, and to utter in its place a distinct and unhesitating *No*. . . . Vain regrets! this union is for life. Therefore, before entering into marriage, let us reflect very seriously on what we are about to do, that we may not prepare for ourselves, like so many others, a miserable future.

The following suggestions, if acted upon, are calculated to prevent many bitter awakenings: they bear chiefly upon three important questions. 1st, *Shall I marry?* 2d, *Whom shall I marry?* 3d, When I have chosen, *how shall I prepare for marriage?*

1st, Shall I marry? Do not deceive yourself, the marriage state is *usually* far more difficult, and far harder than that of celibacy. The unmarried are responsible only for their own acts, and there is no one to share the burden of their troubles, failures, and mistakes. Once married, this responsibility is extended to the husband or the wife, who usually finds this burden slightly insupportable. Besides, it is very difficult to find perfection in a husband or a wife; the education of each has been different, and their ideas are not the same; "*l'un aime le vinaigre, l'autre prefère l'huile,*" from all of which spring tears, disputes, and constant discord. Whilst unmarried, everything went smoothly; the daily requirement was simple enough, but now there are more expenses, and hardly more receipts, hence difficulties arise, and it is a question how to make the two ends meet.

In short, the state of marriage is a difficult one; it brings great duties and heavy burdens; it is a yoke which no one can shake off who has once submitted to it; all should reflect seriously before deciding to accept it, but it is a source of much happiness, and sometimes of salvation.

Supposing that I have answered this question, *Shall I marry*, with an affirmative, what is the next thing to be done?

Whom shall I marry? Ah! this is no trifling question! To choose a husband, to choose a wife! Which is the prize in the lottery! If in a lottery we could always gain the prize, if we could but be sure of drawing the winning number, *then* lottery would be a very delightful thing; alas! it is so far from delightful that almost every one finds it a most ruinous affair. In that human lottery which we call marriage, men almost always lose, and they who chance upon the winning number may be regarded as phenomena. And why is this? The real cause lies in the carelessness and utter want of consideration that is shown by many when about to choose the man, or the woman, to whom they desire to unite the whole of their future destiny. In order to choose well, there are three things to be seriously considered. *The person, family*, and *means*.

The person. Is this young girl fitted for my wife, and will our union be productive of happiness? Is she good and sweet and unselfish? Does she possess the beauty of holiness, and the charm of Christian graces? Is she conscientious and well-informed? Has she been carefully brought up with simple, womanly tastes? Is she free from the too common bane of idleness and inactivity? Has she anything in her favour beyond the attractions of youth, and the girlish gaiety which charms at first, but which is, after all, but as the sparkling of champagne?

How bitter an awakening follows after marriage, when a man has neglected to ask himself such questions as these. It often happens that he has chosen his wife for appearance only; he saw that she was attractive, and believed that she was perfect. . . . Alas! where is this perfection now? He finds himself tied for ever to a nature utterly antagonistic to his own, to a discontented, passionate, self-willed woman, or to some foolish, brainless girl, who only dreams of dress and pleasure, or even to a dull and stupid woman, who will yet contrive to render him entirely miserable.—The case is not a different one with regard to husbands; a girl will consent to marry a man only for the sake of a handsome face, a good figure, and a fund of agreeable conversation. Is he a Christian?

Does he conscientiously fulfil his religious duties, the only surety for the fulfilment of all other duties? Is he a good son? Is he a man of pure morality and unblemished honour. Will his past life furnish a pledge for the future? But the heedless, thoughtless girl puts all such questions carelessly aside, in eagerness to plunge into those unknown waters which are hereafter destined to close relentlessly above her head. "But he is a Protestant!" exclaim her friends. "That is nothing; I will convert him." "But from his childhood he has neglected the sacraments, and is in fact utterly without religion!" "Oh! when he is married, it will be quite different." "But he has led a very worthless life, and is reckless and extravagant!" "With me he will be quite reformed." "But he has a violent temper, and is indolent and very hard to please!" "Do not say any more; I love him, and intend to marry him." "Take your own course, then. In a year or two you will speak very differently."

Family.—Those who marry are forced to adopt, willingly or unwillingly, the family of their husband or their wife. Here also is a subject for consideration. It is quite necessary to consider whether you are about to enter into an honourable and a Christian family. Too often a shining varnish covers a bad picture; therefore it is well to be careful before forming any such close connection, and quite necessary to be thoroughly acquainted with everything concerning the family into which you desire to enter; there is nothing to be more carefully avoided than a connection with any family of ill repute, or of a dishonoured name, since such an association could scarcely fail to have a most baneful effect upon your own life, to poison the very springs of honour or of conscience, and to lower your own reputation. There are people who appear to marry only with a view to the father-in-law whose social position and influence will be most likely to form a stepping-stone in their own calling or career. In such cases it is the father-in-law whom they should marry, and *not* the daughter.

Means.—Here we behold the sinews of marriage still more than the sinews of war! Is it an uncommon custom to measure the worth of any young marriageable woman, or of certain young marrying men, by the value and *extent of their fortune?* She will have money, therefore

she is a very desirable wife. He has scarcely any means, *therefore* I could not marry him. I know well that the question of money is one of real importance both in marriage and throughout life. I do not intend to say that no one should give it any thought: all I say is, that money is not sufficient, and that a Christian, a man who respects himself, is forbidden to marry a fortune, let its dimensions be what they may.

Money should never be regarded but as an accessory; and if there are certain trivial defects which may be passed over, no one should be willing to pass over any lack of the essential requirements of religion, good personal qualities, health, and a fair name. Those who find all these united may make a perfect marriage. *This* is the prize, the most rare prize, which all should seek to obtain.

But if, after all, you are bent upon marrying for the sake of fortune or of family, let me warn you that you will find it needful to be wise in your generation, for poor human nature is not always to be trusted, and the rapid progress of liberty of conscience leaves ever a wider and a wider margin. Your matrimonial prospects may appear most brilliant, your friends may esteem you a most enviable man, you may step with proud elation upon that matrimonial bridge, which appears to lead you straight to the earthly felicity, on which your longing gaze is fixed as upon a veritable land of promise — and lo! the rotten timbers give way beneath your eager tread, and the golden apples you have barely clutched crumble to dust and ashes. You will therefore find it wise to take all the precautions I have suggested if you would escape making a lamentable choice; if you would escape being plunged into the waters of a matrimonial martyrdom, from which, looking over a dreary, weary waste, you will behold your distant Canaan fade, mirage-like, from view.

The third question:—I wish to marry, I have made my choice; *what remains for me to do before pronouncing the irrevocable* YES? There is the religious preparation that must be always made before receiving the sacrament of marriage, and entering into that sacred contract of which the Church alone is the mistress and the guardian.

This religious preparation is of the highest importance *for all* who desire to receive a sacrament, and to receive it *worthily*. One or two weeks before the appointed day, it

s necessary to go to confession in order to be prepared to 'eceive absolution the day before the marriage. If any one lared to present themselves at the foot of the altar without aaving received this sacred absolution, they would commit a sacrilege, quite as serious, quite as fatal, as that of a bad first communion. An excellent practice, and one that cannot be too strongly recommended to the faithful who are preparing themselves for this holy contract, is to communicate together, side by side, on the day before their marriage.

Finally, it is the absolution of the priest, and that alone, which can give a clear conscience, and purify the soul. Such are the preparations, such are the three different phases through which every child of Israel must pass who aspires to the *promised land.*

THE MARRIAGE DAY.

THE all-important day is then arrived. Israel stands by the shore of the matrimonial Jordan. *Jordan,* in Hebrew, signifies the river of *Eden,* the river of gladness. What a happy augury! But unfortunately the Philistines are upon the other side. . . .

The dress and appearance of the bride and bridegroom are everything that can be desired; all the bridesmaids are *charming;* immemorial custom proclaims it loudly; and neither are the groomsmen to be despised. Everything is rose-coloured upon such a day as this! They enter the church, not to receive a simple benediction, as some appear to believe, but to contract marriage in the face of the Church, and of her minister.

Every marriage must be celebrated by the parish priest alone. The presence of any other priest is not sufficient unless he have the consent and authority of the parish priest. This rule, laid down by the Church, is so absolute that the marriage would be invalid if it were not observed; the Church also commands that those about to be married should be accompanied by many witnesses; two at least are necessary, and there should be a greater number.

It is the custom to hear Mass immediately after the ceremony *of marriage,* which is in itself very simple; the

priest turns towards the bride and bridegroom who are kneeling at the foot of the altar, the husband on the right, the wife on the left. After a short exhortation designed to prepare them to receive worthily the sacrament of marriage, and to remind them of the solemn duties which that sacrament is about to impose upon them, the priest asks successively of the man and of the woman, if they desire to take each other mutually for husband and wife, and both must answer in a clear and intelligible voice. Even then it is possible to say *No*—a thing which has sometimes been known; but as soon as both have pronounced the word YES, they are married, married for life, indissolubly married, married until death. The blessing of the priest, and the *conjungo*, are only the official declaration of the marriage that has been contracted, and its promulgation in the name of the Church. It is therefore the mutual consent which forms the contract, and of which the sacrament of marriage may be said to consist.

If any one were to be married without being in a state of grace they would, I repeat, commit a sacrilege; they would receive the sacrament, but they would not receive the grace of the sacrament; they would be married, but this marriage, instead of being *blessed* by God, would be cursed from its very beginning. The special grace bestowed by this sacrament is the grace of sanctification, of mutual love, of strength, and of purity, which accompanies the man and the woman through the whole course of their lives, and enables them to become holy amidst all the temptations which may possibly assail them.

During the interrogations of the priest, the bride and bridegroom, still kneeling, give the right hand to each other as a sign of union. Also, as a sign and a perpetual remembrance of this union, the husband places on the finger of his wife a blessed ring, a ring which is the first link in that chain which death alone can break.

Towards the end of the Mass, between the Pater and the Communion, the celebrant gives a solemn benediction to the bride and bridegroom who kneel beneath a white veil which is held for some instants over their heads; this veil symbolises mutual cohabitation, and the blessing of the Church in this state of life. This custom is not everywhere observed; but the benediction forms a part of the Mass.

When everything is ended they enter the sacristy, and the priest, the bride and bridegroom, and the witnesses all sign the registration of the marriage. And now the wedding festivities commence, and should be observed with perfect moderation and propriety. Whilst following the customs of the country, it is at the same time a matter of conscience for those who have been newly married and for their family to allow nothing which the most strict morality could condemn. There, where it is the custom to dance at weddings, let them dance, but every amusement which might pass beyond the limits of allowable merry-making and of innocent joy, must be scrupulously avoided. It is also quite essential that a great part of the night should not be foolishly passed in eating and drinking, and rushing wildly round and round. All innocent pleasures, they say. That is not true; and confessors can bear a sorrowful testimony to the reverse.

Neither are the wedding feasts, which are, as a rule, interminable and most extravagant, marked by a perfect innocence. It is not allowable at these more than at any other to eat and drink *ad libitum*. Gluttony is always reprehensible, and drunkenness is always ignominious. It is those who have eaten too much and have drunk too freely who fall into the excesses which are so common at these marriage festivals; unseemly jests, offensive songs, and senseless laughter, all as contrary to modesty as to good taste. It is in the spirit of religion, in the quiet consciousness of the presence of God, and in pure and innocent joy, that Christians should pass their marriage day.

AFTER MARRIAGE.

After the roses, thorns; and on the rose-trees, how few the roses, and how many the thorns; in this sense all marriages are, like rose trees, more or less garnished with thorns. What are these thorns? What are the duties which fall so heavily upon married people?

(1.) Their common life and common cares. All hus-

bands have their faults, all wives have theirs. During the first few months everything is perfection. "My husband is so kind and considerate!" "My wife is an angel of goodness!" . . . But in time the *perfection* of the husband evaporates, and only the husband "full of *faults*" remains; the "*angel*" loses one by one the gilded plumes of her wings, until the disappointed husband is finally brought face to face with a woman, far from perfect, a woman exactly similar to other women! What can he do then? Confronted by this hard reality, must he grow angry, irritable, and despondent? No, indeed; he must simply bear it. Understand this clearly: *he must.* It is a duty, a conjugal duty; one of the first requirements in the yoke of marriage.

"But my husband makes himself perfectly hateful; he is unreasonable, obstinate, and always ready for some dispute!" Bear with him patiently; you are his wife, and in spite of all his faults he is your husband. Bear with him, and, still more, *obey* him in all that wounds neither honour nor conscience. The wife, indeed, owes her husband not help and sympathy alone, but deference, submission, honour, and obedience. . . . "But my wife is the most trying of women; my patience is all gone; she is ill-tempered, jealous, absurd!" Bear with her. At the moment of your marriage you entered into a religious engagement before God, and before her, to bear with her whatever she might be. Live with her then as happily as possible, show her all the affection, all the kind consideration which she has a right to expect from you. It is by gentleness and not by violence that you may even yet derive much happiness from your marriage. "A drop of honey," says St. Francis of Sales, "attracts more flies than a cask of vinegar."

The every-day duties of life are not so simple as some appear to think. People need no small amount of virtue to enable them to adapt themselves willingly to each other in the thousand little details of ordinary existence. It is, as a rule, more difficult for two persons to live together than for one to live alone; yet this is what all men and women must do when they enter upon married life.

(2.) *Conjugal fidelity.* The husband or wife who should violate their oaths of fidelity would, by so doing, commit

a horrible sin called adultery. This sin is so grievous that it is pursued even by the civil laws. It violates all the fundamental laws of family life, and introduces disorder and depravity there, where holy union, sworn fidelity, pure and unalterable love alone should reign. Further, let no one deceive themselves: conjugal chastity is a difficult duty. As regards morality, marriage is not a state exempt from danger; far from this, it is attended by serious peril, as people of experience know, and is, consequently, not only less perfect, but less happy than the state of celibacy and Christian continency. This point was formally declared by the Council of Trent against Luther. In order to preserve intact their mutual fidelity, a husband and wife should keep as strict a watch over themselves as a young man and a young girl. The wife should avoid all coquetry, and should shrink from anything that could appear like an endeavour to attract the admiration or attention of men; the husband, on his side, should avoid every species of flirtation, and should renounce all those trifling immunities, at which the worldly only laugh, but which prove so often to be but the first steps in the execrable and shameless path of adultery; through which alone a husband and wife are allowed to separate for ever. It need not be said that whilst either is living, the other, though lawfully separated, may form no other marriage bond. Chastity is only possible to the married, as to the unmarried, by the almighty power of religion, the practice of which is, here on earth, the source of every good.

(3.) *The care and education of children.* The first end of marriage is, in the designs of God, the creation and generation of children. It is a great grace to give to God and to the Church children who are destined for Paradise. Sterility has always been regarded as a misfortune; and therefore it is an unpardonable thing that husbands and wives should repine when God sends them many children, and those who basely recoil before the most sacred of burdens are unworthy of the honour which God deigns to bestow upon them, when He raises them to the almost divine rank of father and of mother. It is a truth which has been universally accepted in all ages, that the blessing of God rests upon numerous families.

The principal duty of the father is to provide by his industry, his care, and his work, for the needs and the

well-being of his wife and children. After an undutiful son, there is nothing worse than a bad father.

The duties of the mother relate more directly to the management of the household, to the details of domestic cares, and to the greatest watchfulness in all that concerns her little children. It is she who should tend and nourish them, except when that is truly impossible; it is she, even more than the father, who should teach them, from their tenderest childhood, to clasp their little hands in prayer, to lisp the holy names of Jesus and of Mary, and to love their heavenly Father ; she must spare no pains to bring up her children well, but must be ever ready to give them good advice, simple instructions, rewards, reproofs, and constant care by night and day. A bad mother would be an anomaly ; happily there are very few.

The care of children, the third duty of marriage, continues throughout life, even when the children have grown up : the father and mother should always labour for their good and their salvation : the Christian family is nothing but a community for mutual help and love; a community in which all work for their common welfare here, and for eternal happiness hereafter. The sacrament of matrimony is as the soul of every household ; it is a fountain of life springing forth in the midst of every Christian home to fertilise, to vivify, and to cause it to bring forth abundant fruits of happiness and salvation. Jesus Christ, through the sacrament of matrimony, becomes the King of families, just as He is, through the sacrament of Holy Orders, the King of the Church.

THIRD PART.

WHAT IT IS TO BE A CHRISTIAN.

Do my Christian readers clearly understand what it truly is to be a *Christian?*

It certainly is not, as some people with slightly confused ideas appear to imagine, merely to abstain from murdering or plundering your neighbour. To do this is just to escape being a villain, that is all.

To be a *Christian* is not merely to be a good father, a good husband, a good son, a good workman, an industrious and honourable man, a good comrade, &c.; that is only to be an *honest man*, and a Christian is something more than an honest man.

To be a Christian is not merely to respect religion, to consider it good and useful, to acknowledge that Christianity has inspired noble deeds; that is simply to judge fairly, and to possess the good sense of an intelligent man: in order to hold such opinions as these nothing is needed but to rise above vulgar prejudices, and to despise the pointless sneers of a shallow philosophy.

Lastly, to be a *Christian* is not merely to observe certain exterior practices, such as to hear Mass regularly, to abstain, or even to go to confession. These practices, although very excellent, are nevertheless only *means* by which to become and to remain a true Christian. Then what *is* the Christian life? and what is a true Christian?

A *Christian* is a baptized man, who believes with his whole heart all that is taught, in the name of Jesus Christ,

by the Pope and the Bishops, who have been entrusted by the Saviour to spread the Christian religion throughout the world; a man, moreover, who observes, as far as human weakness will allow, all the commandments of God and the laws of the Church; and who earnestly strives to the best of his power to imitate Jesus Christ, his God, his Saviour, and his great example.

A *Christian* is a man who loves God before all things, who would choose to suffer anything rather than offend Him, who detests sin in others, and still more in himself; he is a man who loves and practises the right, who battles constantly and perseveringly with all his evil passions, and who, in spite of the evil inclinations which will sometimes rage powerfully within him, is still pure and humble, patient and merciful, indulgent to the faults of others, patient and resigned in misfortune.

A *Christian* is a man who is constant in prayer, and who follows in the footsteps of his Lord and Master, and thus, ever looking to Jesus, learns from Him the daily lessons of virtue that He needs. He pardons his enemies, even as Jesus Christ pardoned His. Like Him he goes about doing good. He loves all men, but especially the poor, the forsaken, the insignificant. In prosperity his heart is ever detached from earth, and lifted up to that heavenly home where the only true good is to be found. In poverty and suffering he is calm and full of hope, remembering that to the sorrows of Calvary succeeds the joy of the resurrection, and that it is only through the cross that we can gain the crown.

A Christian, then, is a living copy of Jesus Christ; a man who loves what Jesus Christ loves, condemns what He condemns, and judges in all things as He judges; and in this man, His faithful servant, Jesus Christ Himself does, in a manner, still live and walk with men.

Such is the true Christian, such we all ought to be, such we should all become or remain!

There is no position in life in which it is impossible to be a Christian. In poverty or wealth, in health or sickness, in youth or age, it is all one; and we should each, without exception, be holy, and should model our lives by that perfect pattern which we have just sketched out. Are we true Christians? Do we possess that humility, that *singleness* of heart, that disinterestedness and that purity

of life, which constitute the Christian character. Let the conscience of each one of us answer this question! Alas! mine does not respond to it very readily—and reader, what of yours?

Let us, then, take courage, and turn to the Lord our God. Pagans, perhaps, until now, let us make haste to become Christians! If our own weakness cause us to shrink from such great and serious duties, let us have recourse to that powerful aid which the mercy of God has placed in the bosom of the Church. Let us pray, let us frequent the sacraments, let us seek in the confession of our sins a remedy for the past, and in frequent communion strength for the future. Let us make a vigorous effort, nor shrink from any trouble that is required of us by God; does He not deserve it from us? Life passes quickly! Let us work whilst it is day: blessed is that servant whom He shall find watching; a few hours of weariness, a few hours of brave and patient fighting, and then, to the passing trials of this earthly probation succeeds the eternal rest, the unutterable gladness promised by the Saviour.

WHY SO MANY UPRIGHT PEOPLE FAIL TO FULFIL THEIR RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

It is a fact, and one which is much to be regretted, that there are a great number of men and women of unblemished character, of great goodness of heart, and who are leading correct and peaceful lives, yet who do not fulfil their religious duties. They pray, in some cases at all events, with a certain amount of regularity; they do not ridicule religion; they even defend it when there is need; from time to time they hear Mass on Sunday; they abstain on Good Friday, and sometimes on all Fridays; they regard as of the highest importance that religious care by which the education of their children is surrounded; their feelings are deeply touched at the time of the first communion of their son or daughter; they would not die without the sacraments for any earthly consideration; their life appears irreproachable. Only one thing is wanting: they neither go to confession nor to holy communion. Is this a great evil when all other duties are faithfully accomplished?

Yes, a great evil. A vessel fastened to the shore by an iron chain becomes, if a single link of this chain chance to be broken, the mere sport of the waves, and loses its only protection. God is our Saviour amidst all the perils of human life and the storm of human passions; the chain which binds us to Him, and consequently saves us, is religion; and even as a chain is made up of a succession of links, so religion is made up of a succession of obligations which form one complete whole, and are closely attached one to another. To break one single link, to violate one single precept of religion, is to separate ourselves from God, to lose the life of the soul, and to jeopardise our eternal salvation. The obligation for every Christian to confess regularly, and to communicate at least once a year, is an absolute and rigorous law, the violation of which is a mortal sin. Therefore, however unbroken the rest of the chain, if this double link is wanting, all is broken between ourselves and God; whatever the blamelessness, integrity, and morality of our lives in every other respect, this twofold duty being omitted, the soul is separated from Jesus Christ; and if it remain in this state, is lost for all eternity. Therefore, not to confess, and not to communicate, is a very great evil, a most disastrous fault, and an utter folly. Now what is the reason that the people of whom I speak do not go to confession? Are they wanting in faith? Not the least in the world. Is it human respect which holds them back? Perhaps a little, but that is not the true cause of which I desire to speak, although that may be also, alas! a very frequent one. Have they not sufficient courage to acknowledge their faults? If not, they should summon courage whatever it may cost them. What is it, then, which keeps them thus so often far from God. Two mere trifles, which are, nevertheless, sufficiently powerful to compass the sins of innumerable souls: *Habit*, and *a certain embarrassment as to the manner in which they are to break through that routine into which they have allowed themselves to fall.* How many men, returning to their duties after ten, twenty, and thirty years of neglect, would have fulfilled them long ago, if they had only known what to do, in order to go to confession and to communion. They have been in the habit of meeting priests, but they have not known them *intimately* enough to open their hearts to them; and then

they have been held back by a feeling of false shame in acknowledging that they have not confessed for so many years. Occasions have not presented themselves, or have passed unheeded, and with them passed the months and years; and the gulf grew deeper and deeper still.

It is probable that these words will be read by more than one to whom they will apply. As a true friend I would entreat all such to summon courage, and to live no longer in this practical oblivion of God. Your path is very clear and very simple: go to the first priest you can find; seek him either in his own house, or in the sacristy of his church; priests are well accustomed to such visits; tell him simply and frankly that you have neglected your religious duties, that you desire to make your confession, and that you will be glad if he will give you his help. I promise you a kind reception; you will soon know by sweet experience how happy a thing it is to be at peace with God.

THE RELIGION OF THE HONEST MAN.

THERE are a number of people who believe in the religion of honesty. It may not then be unnecessary to endeavour to point out to them the true nature of this religion. But, my honest friend, what *is* your religion? In what does it consist? What does it command? What does it forbid?

And this brings us to the first embarrassment of those whose religion is in honesty. For if they reply that it consists in fulfilling all duties well, in doing good, and avoiding evil, we can convict them of weakness on all points.

Let us turn first to a young man of unworthy morals and dissolute life, who saddens his mother's heart and dishonours his father's name. He will still assert that he is *honest;* making light of what he terms the "follies of youth," and excusing himself by the vain plea that he is no worse than other men have been whose honesty is now unquestioned.

Let us next consider the workman with his strong and muscular frame who, although he may be *honest,* yet works only half as hard when he is paid by the day as when he is paid by the piece; our next character is one who, alas,

goes reeling from the public house each Saturday night, taking but half of his *honest* earnings to his miserable wife, and his frightened half-starved children : or a third, returning home with lowering brows, and ready oaths, and angry tones. And all these will indignantly claim to be considered *honest* men !

And again, another character ; a man tyrannical over those whom he employs, a hard master, and a stern employer, harsh and exacting, yet who lays claim to a fair name among men, and whose boast is in his honesty.

What can you say of all these ? If you admit them among the *faithful* of your religion of honesty, you must acknowledge that they fall far below that standard of right which we first considered.

I admit that it is a great thing to be an honest man ; it is a great thing to be a good citizen, ever ready to maintain social order and public tranquillity ; a good father, a good husband, a good son, a good neighbour, and a good friend. All this is very necessary, and those who fail in such duties fall far short of what is absolutely required of them. But I can assure you that all this is not sufficient, that these duties are not religion, although they are commanded by religion. Something more is required of a man, and that something is *Christianity*.

And why ? Because there is a living God, who is your Creator and your Father. Because this Almighty God has created you to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him, and thus to merit an eternal union with Himself, an eternal happiness in the life that is to come. Because, when this world shall have passed away, there shall be another which shall never pass away ; a world in which God will bestow an everlasting reward upon those who have been faithful, and will visit with everlasting punishment those who have neglected to love Him and to serve Him. Because Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, came into our midst to teach us how to live in order to attain this glorious eternity ; because He pointed out to us clearly and unmistakably the path of right, the path to heaven, and declared that whosoever would not hear His words should be rejected by His Father in heaven.

And lastly, because this Divine Master has sent to men the pastors of His Church, and declared to us, when sending them to be the pastors of His people, that He would con-

tinually assist them with His Holy Spirit in the teaching and administration of the one true religion, that to hear them was to hear Himself, that to disobey them was to disobey Himself, even Jesus the Son of God!

And, therefore, in order to be true children of God, to accomplish our destiny in this world, and to live in peace and truth and holiness, it is absolutely necessary to believe and to practise the Christian religion just as it is taught to the world by the Pope, and the Bishops of the Catholic Church. And this is why morality, although most necessary, is very far from being all-sufficient.

FEAR OF HUMAN OPINION.

"I WOULD willingly fulfil my religious duties, but I am afraid of ridicule."—Then you are afraid to go to heaven, and not afraid to go to hell? you must have a very singular courage, and a remarkable determination! Oh, man, feeble and faithless! you are indeed faint-hearted, and should blush for your own weakness and dishonour, for what, I ask, is a greater dishonour than cowardice?

Respect for human opinion in matters of religion is the greatest cowardice of all. It is a voluntary renunciation of that which is holiest and most sacred in man—his conscience. It is a weak abandonment of our most essential rights and of our most important duties! that of leading holy Christian lives, of accomplishing our destiny here, and of saving our soul hereafter! Such cowardice is something worse than weakness, it is a folly and a sin.

You are afraid to say your prayers, to avoid evil company and places of temptation, to go to church, to seek the friendship of the priests, and to serve God. And what could be more deserving of honour than a conscientious fulfilment of such duties as these? Prayer, the service of God, and obedience to His law are the marks which most perfectly distinguish us from creatures without reason. For the animal destitute of reason has no eternal destiny, and fulfils all the laws of *its* being when conscious only of the passing moments of its limited existence. But you yourself are here on earth only that you may hereafter go to heaven; and time for you is nothing but a prelude to

eternity. Heaven and eternity! Behold the end and aim of life, the end which should reign supreme above all others, and without which everything is lost. Therefore by not daring to serve God during your life, you wilfully renounce both heaven and eternity; you sacrifice God, your own salvation, your own soul, and your own happiness, even as you sacrifice your duty and your conscience to a miserable fear of man, which is a thousand times unworthy of a Christian, and is despicable in a man.

"I should be ridiculed," you say! What a grievous affliction! What effect would it have upon you? You can surely afford to despise what is so utterly beneath your notice. Supposing men laughed at you because you ate when you were hungry, and drank when you were thirsty, and warmed yourself when you were cold, because you loved your mother, because you were not a scoundrel. I am speaking seriously—would you change, do you think, and try to act in some manner which would give greater satisfaction to those who thus criticised you? You will not trouble yourself to answer *such* a question? There is that which is more reasonable, more natural, more lawful, and more necessary still; obedience to God your Creator, the practise of religion, and the keeping of His commandments. To fear to be a Christian, is to fear to be a reasonable being, it is to fear to be a good, conscientious, and honourable man.

Go, therefore, to confession, go to the holy altar, coward that you are! and fear God rather than man!

NEGLIGENCE.

For many years the world has been devastated by a fatal and terrible sickness, which has made dreadful ravages: in all places at one and the same time: in France, England, Italy, Europe, whether the air be bad or good, the people civilised or barbarous, the whole world suffers from its fatal and deathly influence; and for centuries victims have succumbed to it. You doubtless imagine that I am referring to some one of those scourges which we call pestilence, cholera, typhus fever, &c.: but no; the evil that *I would* point out to you is still more terrible, and causes

the death of a still greater number of men; it not only affects the body, but it also poisons the soul, and its fatal effects endure beyond the portals of the grave.

This deplorable evil is negligence. This it is which causes the ruin of whole families and plunges them into the frightful miseries to which they sooner or later succumb. This epidemic is so much the more to be dreaded because there are no signs which give warning of its terrible approach, and it seizes a man before he suspects it is near; it draws him little by little from his duties to God, and soon after from his duties to his family and towards his fellow-men. This scourge is one of the fatal fruits of original sin.

The first symptoms show themselves, when, on being confronted by some difficulty, you stop, hesitate, and address such words to yourself as these: I cannot! It is too difficult! I have no time! I will do it on some other occasion, but not now! It is not worth the trouble of begining, because I shall never be able to go on! It is beyond my capabilities! Oh! then, whilst there is yet time, ask yourself quickly these two questions, and answer them by the light of your own conscience.

1st, What should I do if I were quite assured that directly I had accomplished that which now appears to be impossible, I should receive five pounds as the price of my efforts? 2d, What should I also do if I were equally certain that I should receive a hundred stripes directly I had yielded to those insidious suggestions of negligence, which I believe at this moment that I cannot resist?

These two questions, with the answer which your conscience cannot fail to give, will prove a sure and simple remedy against the evil I have pointed out to you.

I HAVE NO TIME.

Out of ten persons who do not fulfil their religious duties, there are at least six or seven who will say to you when you speak to them about it, "I should be glad enough to do so, but I have no time, every one must gain their living. Religion is good for people with nothing else to do, who can live without working."

Nothing is more false than such reasoning as this, nothing could be more opposed to the spirit of Christianity; religion is made for all, even as God is the Father of all; and if there were any distinction to be made amongst men, it would, unquestionably, be the poor and the insignificant who would take precedence in the sight of God.

This is a very common error amongst the working classes, especially in large towns; and we must say that it entirely results from ignorance. They have an absurd idea of religion—they believe that it solely consists of a very great number of outward observances; and the daily work which is absolutely necessary to workmen in order to gain a living, being evidently incompatible with such practices, they solve the difficulty by the habitual words, which they lay down as an axiom, but which are in truth an unconscious blasphemy: "*I have no time.*" But tell me, my friend, *how much time* you need to love God? *How much time* do you need to think of Him sometimes during the course of the day; to ask Him to bless you, to crown your efforts with success, and to give you the rest of heaven after the sorrows and weariness of earth? *How much time* does it take to keep from swearing,—to honour your father and mother and lawful superiors,—to abstain from drinking,—to pardon your enemies,—not to return evil for evil,—to bear with the faults of others? *How much time* does it take to be chaste and pure, to turn from evil thoughts, to avoid sinful conversation, to shun such and such a bad companion who would be sure to lead you into wrong. *Does it take much time* to repent when we have done some wicked foolish thing? Still more, does it take much time to pray morning and evening. In five minutes, in ten minutes at the most, this great duty can be perfectly fulfilled; and where is the man who cannot, if he so will, spare some few minutes, at the beginning and at the end of the day?

But then, you will say, religion commands so many other things. You must hear mass on Sundays and holidays. You must go to confession, and go to communion, and does not all that take time? That is what I mean when I say I have no time. And what do those who are quite as busy as you are, and often much more busy and still more in need of gaining a salary, and who yet do all that, and more than that? I know some who never pass one week without *receiving* the sacraments. How do they find time to fulfil

their duties? What they do, you can do. It is the will that is wanting, and not the time. The reason that you do not find time, just as they find time, is because you have not the deep conviction that they have of the vital necessity of religion. You consider the body before the soul, they consider the soul before the body. Not that they neglect their families and their own bodily requirements, no; only they know the value and the difference of things, and rule their lives according to the truth.

What would you say if your employer attempted to deprive you of the time to eat? You would leave him, and you would say: *First of all*, we must live! I say to you still more emphatically: first of all, even before the life of your body, take thought for your soul, which is the noblest part of your self; your soul which makes of you a man, since through the body we are only animals; it is the soul which makes the man, and distinguishes him from the beast.

Religion gives life to your soul by uniting it to God, and yet you tell me, I have no time to practise religion! Then, make time, this necessary time; make time, whatever it may cost you to do it, no matter where, no matter at whose expense. No one in the world has a right to deprive you of it; neither your employer, nor your masters, nor your father, nor your mother, nor yourself; *no one*, without any exception!

The eternal salvation of your soul may not be taken away from you by any living creature, and if any one should attempt to rob you of the most sacred of your rights, *then* is the time to practise the great Christian rule: To lose everything rather than to lose God.

But it is my calling, you add, which prevents me from attending to my salvation. Is that true? Answer me carefully; for if, after having well reflected, you still answered "yes," I would say to you: then you must give it up, and find some other. What will it profit you to gain the whole world and lose your own soul?

But is it really true that your calling actually prevents you from living a Christian life? Does your calling prevent you from thinking of God sometimes, from praying to Him morning and evening, from offering Him your troubles, your work, your privations? It is not your

calling which forces you to take the holy name of God in vain, which drives you to public-houses, and music halls, and all manner of evil resorts. The time that you spend thus would be far more than sufficient to make you a good Christian, if you would only employ it as a Christian should. For my own part, I know of no calling which need prevent the workman after his day's work is done from going to his confessor in the evening before all great festivals, and receiving the pardon of his sins, and advice and encouragement to lead a better life in the future. I know of no calling which need prevent him from going occasionally in the early morning to church, to hear low mass, and to receive communion. As a point of conscience, you must clearly see that all have *time* to do, what they *will* to do. But the will is an absolute necessity.

Therefore, say no longer, I have no time to be a Christian, for you only deceive yourself. Say if you wish, I have not as much time, or as many opportunities, as I should wish. That may be so, but after all, it is but the heart and the will to serve Him that God requires, and for this, there is no question of time. To him who will not give to God his *time*, God will refuse His *eternity*.

BUSINESS BEFORE ALL THINGS.

An old woman, a seller of marine stores, lived in a little village on the outskirts of Paris; she was held in no small repute amongst her neighbours owing to her proverbial merriment, her facetious remarks, and her candour upon all subjects. Now this *good* woman possessed some very striking qualities: to begin with, she had never killed any one, she had never helped herself to money out of her neighbour's pockets, she loved a joke, and was, besides, particularly successful in her own little business. It is true that she never stepped foot in a church, but she made a little bow to "*Monsieur le Curé*," every time that he passed her shop; she respected religion so much that once even, in an *excess* of zeal, she had formally bestowed a vigorous box on the ear upon a mason who had been disputing with a certain wine-seller on the subject of theology,

and who had gone so far as to proclaim that there was no God.

She was, therefore, an incomparable old woman; she believed herself to be a most spotless character, and had, she said, nothing to reproach herself for—absolutely nothing—during the whole sixty-four years of her life.

Her favourite motto was, "Business before all things!" This was a plea she invariably used if any one attempted to reason with her, and to point out that at *her* age, it would be surely more prudent to think of eternity. "Ah, that is all very fine," she would say in a tone of hopeless obstinacy, "I am not rich enough to do nothing, and go to church. I must gain my living; and then, business before all things! That is all *I* know." "Business is all very well," she was answered one day by a respectable woman who had come to see her, and who was very much liked in the village because of her many good qualities. "When people are as poor as we are, they must work and gain a living. But whilst they are gaining a living, they must take care they do not lose heaven; that has to be gained also, and it cannot be won just by being a worthy, honest woman; you have to be a good Christian, and fulfil your religious duties. Mark my words: *your duties.*" "Oh, I understand what you are saying; but to fulfil religious duties one must have time, and that is just what I have not. *I've* no time to spare—business before all things." "Ah, but you could find time if you wished; it takes little time and no trouble to say a prayer or two morning and evening." "Oh, as to that, I'm not so bad as you make out. I never forget to make the sign of the cross when I'm going to bed. My good man used to say to me that that was all nonsense, poor dear old man, God rest his soul! But no, I have always held firm, I have always served the good God." "But that is not enough, you cannot serve God just by making the sign of the cross when you go to bed; it is not even enough to say your prayers, you must, besides, go to hear Mass every Sunday."

"But I tell you I've no time! business"—— "Nonsense! you're not going to make me believe that you can't do what I can do, who keeps a shop as well as you, and can only just make two ends meet. When we try to do anything for God, He is always ready to help the poor. I never sell on Sundays when I am not obliged, and then it

isn't a sin. But generally my shop is closed; I go to Mass, like all good Catholics, and I take a little turn after church; I rest from my six days' work, and you see I'm none the worse for it. We have always been good friends and neighbours, and I wish I could get you to follow my example." "But my business"—— "Why, your business would get on just the same, and even supposing you did make sixpence or a shilling a week less, what would that matter, compared to the service of God. Don't you see that we are not on earth to live just like dogs. Dogs don't go to Mass, not they: they can't confess, or think of God, or heaven, or hell. Now, come, listen to me, neighbour, next Sunday we will shut up shop, and go to Mass together. Will we not?"

I cannot inform you whether the good woman was finally succcessful concerning her old friend, or whether by the following Sunday she had returned to her ancient refrain: *Business before all things.* We believe, however, that the kind neighbour gained the day. She is dead now, and the poor old woman also; if the latter could return to earth, she would say no longer, "*Business before all things,*" but rather, "BEFORE ALL, SALVATION."

ON THE FOLLY OF DELAY.

THE past belongs to us no more; the future does not belong to us yet, and perhaps never will, the present only is ours. Therefore, whenever we have anything of consequence to do, let us, if possible, do it at once, and never put it off until that to-morrow which perhaps may not arrive; above all, should we fear to defer it until some distant future.

An incident which happened recently in a prison at Paris, will help to show how wise and necessary this rule of conduct is. The prison consists of two divisions; in one part the ordinary criminals are confined, whilst the other is entirely allotted to more youthful offenders, who, owing to their precocity in vice, have been condemned to a certain length of imprisonment. Easter time was drawing near. The good chaplain of this prison, therefore, *assembled* all these young men, and after speaking to

them on the serious obligation of fulfilling their Easter duties, he requested those who desired to prepare themselves to give himtheir names that he might write them down. All presented themselves, with only one exception. This was a young man of seventeen.

The chaplain, troubled at his silence, which contrasted so forcibly with the willing assent of the others, went the following day to see him in his cell. "Well, my friend," he said to him kindly, "you forgot, did you not, to have your name entered for the Easter duties?" "No, sir," answered the young prisoner calmly; "I did not forget, . . . but I have not decided; I am not prepared." . . . "O my child, that is nothing! I will help you to prepare yourself. It is the simplest thing in the world. Let me enter your name with the others in my list. I will make it my care to see that you perfectly fulfil your duty." "No, sir, no; not now; another time perhaps. Not this year; next year." . . . "What, next year? But, my poor young friend, next year you will have just the same difficulties. Why should you delay? You are not sure." . . . "Yes, yes; I will do my Easter duties next year; this year I cannot." The chaplain saw it would be useless to say anything more, and left him much distressed by such unhappy stubbornness. "Poor young fellow," he said to himself, "he refuses the only comfort that is left to him in his captivity. If he only knew what he rejects!"

The next morning he went down, according to his usual custom, to the cells in the infirmary to see another young prisoner, who was also seventeen years of age, and who had received the last sacrament five or six days before. Passing down the corridor, he noticed on the door next to the one to which he was going, the number of the prisoner who had shown such unhappy dispositions only the day before. Much astonished, he opened the door, and there, in fact, he saw the young man, lying down, and looking very pale. "What is the matter?" he asked; "yesterday you appeared perfectly well, my child, and to-day I find you here in the infirmary?"

There was no answer. . . .

The chaplain drew near to him.

"Ah! my God!" he exclaimed, "he is very ill." And he *went out immediately* to call the doctor and the Sister

of Charity. Both came in haste. "Look," said the priest, "this young man has fainted. What is the matter with him?" "It cannot be anything serious," answered the sister; "it is only an hour since he came down, merely complaining of a headache." The doctor went up to the bed, and bending over the unfortunate young man, he felt his pulse, and laid his hand on his heart. "He is dead, poor boy," he said in a tone of much feeling. But the priest stood, as though rooted to the spot unable to utter a word, his eyes fixed with a look of unutterable sorrow upon the dead upturned face, and the pale parted lips. . . . And it seemed to him as though he still heard the words: "Next year . . . no religious duties this year. . . . Another time—another year." . . . And Eternity had suddenly opened out before him,—an Eternity which could never bring to him "*another year*." . . . And this soul was already judged! The good priest turned from the lifeless body sick at heart.

In the next cell the other young prisoner was also stretched upon a bed of suffering. The sure signs of death were already written on his face. . . . "O Father," he said, in a faint weak voice, when he saw the priest enter his cell, "O Father, I feel so happy! I am dying; I shall soon be with God! Since I received the sacraments, I have felt so happy, so peaceful!" And when the chaplain held out to him some hope of recovery—"Do not say so," he exclaimed; "do not tell me that I shall not die. I would much rather die now, you see, because I am so well prepared. . . . I feel that I love God now. . . . If I went out from here I should perhaps offend Him, and lose my own soul! Oh no, it is far better for me to die now!" . . . And the same evening, this soul, so different to the other, appeared in its turn before our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

The next day, the two coffins were placed side by side in the chapel belonging to the prison, and were taken thence to the cemetery, where the same grave received them both. . . . When they shall both rise again at the last day, will their fate be the same? Alas! although the infinite mercy of God has unfathomable depths, of which we are utterly ignorant, have we not reason to fear that *one of* these two will be on the left of the Heavenly *Judge, whilst* the other will be placed on the right? And

this only for having delayed until another time a duty which it would have been so simple to have accomplished at once!

Where is the man who can fail to profit by so terrible an example?

CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

In speaking of faith, and of the *Credo*, we saw that the great reason for which we ought to believe all the truths of religion is that God Himself has revealed them by Jesus Christ His Son, who teaches them to us with infallible truth by the ministry of His Church.

The principle of morality is no less divine; and the reason for which we should faithfully observe the commandments of God, and of His Church, practise Christian virtues and live according to the rules of the Gospel, is that God himself so wills, and that this supreme holy will is made known to us most clearly through Jesus Christ and His ministers.

The word *morality* means the *moral law;* in Latin, *morum lex.*

To be *moral* or righteous, is simply to live in accordance with that law which comes from God and which is the expression of His will; to be immoral or unrighteous, is to follow the natural inclinations in preference to the will of God, and to be ruled by the passions, and not by the Divine law. Conscience is that inward light which reveals to us our duty, which reproaches us when we transgress, and applauds our obedience when we have the courage to listen to the voice of God, and to prove ourselves true Christians.

But just as there is in the world false money, which is easily mistaken for good unless it is closely examined, so is there a false morality, which is, alas! very prevalent, and which entirely results from ignorance and unbelief; a morality which does in no way suffice for the accomplishing of the will of God, and yet which many people content themselves with practising. It has been called ironically the morality of the *reasonable man*, but it is a very different thing from true Christian morality. Those who possess no other, falsely imagine that they have all that is needful;

and this deceiving tranquillity is often the greatest obstacle to their return to the true service of God. There is nothing more convenient nor more elastic than is this false morality. We might even add that there is nothing more immoral, or, at least, that there is nothing more powerless, to render a man truly virtuous. It might be summed up in two negative commands: Thou shalt not kill.—Thou shalt not steal. Two very desirable and praiseworthy requirements unquestionably, but such as do not go a great way, seeing that, beyond the precincts of a prison, nearly all mankind, both bad and good, could quite conscientiously claim this remarkable title to the esteem of their fellow-men. This mysterious *moral law* goes no farther, but leaves everything else wrapped in a vague uncertainty, which must be peculiarly soothing to those who are drawn by inclinations towards some action of doubtful morality, It is true that it grandiloquently commands its votaries to be good fathers, good sons, good husbands, and good citizens; but if we enter upon the question of the daily duties of life, and rules of conduct, morals, and temper, or methods of subduing vice, evil habits, selfish instincts, it has not a word to say; it forbids nothing and tolerates everything. Having this law for his only rule of life, a man might be a gambler, a drunkard, and a profligate; he might be passionate, quarrelsome, and selfish, a spendthrift, or a miser, at will; he might be utterly destitute of love of any one except himself, and devoured by idleness, pride, or sensuality.

Who does not see the hollowness of such a morality, and how impossible it is to find in such indeterminate maxims the necessary power to subdue the rebellion of the passions? It is, in fact, nothing but a deception, which enables men to do evil without burdening their consciences too heavily. Unfortunately for them, God is more exacting, and who can say that He is wrong?

That pure Christian morality, which He Himself has given us, is the law by which He will hereafter judge us; and it is no more within our power to modify it than it is in our power to change the course of the stars, or to alter the laws of nature. Very different from the morality of the rationalist is that Christian morality resting entirely upon the religion of which it is the practice. Its foundation, to which it refers everything, is the love and service

of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Gospel, with its Divine maxims, is its code, and it teaches us first the necessity of penance, of self-renunciation, of brotherly love, of humility and gentleness, of purity of heart, and chastity; of detachment from the world, of obedience to God and to His Church; in one word, the practice of the Christian life and Christian virtues. It must be acknowledged that there is some difference between this rule of conduct, and the unmeaning maxims of *the good father*, *the good son*, *the good husband*, and *the good citizen*. The most such maxims as these are capable of, as was wittily said by St. Francis of Sales, is to save us from being needy, and to gain us the esteem of those who neither look below the surface, nor scrutinise too closely.

As it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of our souls that we obey the law of God, and live in accordance with His will, it is most important, it is even necessary, to have a clear knowledge of Christian morality in order to be able to practise it. Let us, therefore, study it together in all its principal teachings.

CONCERNING CONSCIENCE.

CONSCIENCE is that inner voice which rules our conduct, and passes judgment upon our actions, teaching us whether they are good or evil, justifiable or clearly forbidden. The voice of conscience sounds approvingly when we do right, and visits us with sharp remorse when we do wrong. This voice, this judge, is God Himself; it is the living Truth; it is Jesus Christ dwelling within us. We can by no possibility drive this Divine voice out from the sanctuary of our hearts. We may close our ears that we may not hear when we are bent on resisting it and desire to do evil, but we can never silence the voice of God, which thus becomes, even in this world, our judgment, and our condemnation. If, on the contrary, we are obedient to its teaching, if our lives are ruled by this hidden law, then shall the soul enjoy on earth a foretaste of the joys of Heaven, and shall see in God only a Saviour, a Father, and a Friend, who communicates to it, even in this world, that peace and happiness which it is destined to possess, in perfect plenitude, hereafter.

Conscience is an unerring tribunal, and we must either be guided by its judgments or fall into sin. But it often happens that human weakness and the wiles of the devil prevent us from clearly discerning the voice of conscience. We are, then, in the same embarrassment as the servant who hears but indistinctly the orders of his master, or rather, under the same delusion as a man partially deaf who believes that he hears something different to what has been really said. How should one act who finds himself in this false position?

In the first place, and this is a general rule, it is never allowable to go *against* the conscience—that is to say, no one may ever perform an action which they believe to be guilty, or abstain from an action which they believe to be commanded. Therefore, the one thing needful is to cultivate a clear, true, loyal, and upright conscience, and to do this, it is generally sufficient to seek the truth earnestly, and to resist all deceptions.

If, nevertheless, in spite of good intentions we cannot succeed in forming a conscientious judgment, we must seek and follow with simplicity the advice of some enlightened person, of a good priest, if that be possible, and be guided by his decision. There is no rule of conduct more practical than this, for many good people, whose conscience is tender and scrupulous, will often feel embarrassed and doubtful as to how they ought to act. If, by any misfortune, we have neither time nor means of seeking advice, let us form as conscientious a decision as we can, and strive earnestly to do that which we *think* to be right, in all cases when we cannot feel certain. When involved in absolute doubt, let us ever choose the safest side, and follow it to an extreme rather than risk the chance of offending God.

We do not hesitate to say that a clear conscience is the true secret of happiness. Happiness is deeply rooted in the heart of man: it is not shut up within the purse, nor is it to be attained by means of bodily indulgence. Those who enjoy an inward peace, who love God, and seek to please and serve Him, may be happy even in sickness and suffering, and amidst all the privations of poverty. Death itself wears a different aspect, and every day good Christians prove, by their calmness, their serenity, and their happiness at that supreme moment, the truth of what we *have just* said.

"This is a happy day for me," said a poor soldier, condemned to death, to the priest who was assisting him and leading him to the place of execution, "a very happy day, father! I shall soon be with God, I am going home. My heart is so full of gladness, it seems as if I must be going to some joyful festival. I have sinned very heavily, but I hope that God will show me much mercy." This poor condemned soldier had fully made his peace with God during the two months which passed between the sentence and its execution. Moved to the deepest repentance he had approached the sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist every week, and his conscience, transfigured by religion, was now in the enjoyment of a perfect peace, and a marvellous calm.

Do not wait until the last moment to purify your conscience. If it reproach you with some serious fault, do not harden your heart and deceive your own self; but rather repent of the evil of which it accuses you, and at once, like the prodigal son, arise, and return unto your Father. Summon all your courage; do not wait until it is too late. Go and make a good and sincere confession of your sins to some good priest; from him you will obtain mercy, encouragement, and consolation, and he will restore to you the inestimable treasure of a quiet conscience, by pardoning your sins in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE GRACE OF GOD.

We must not think that we only need a clear knowledge of our duty, and shall then necessarily accomplish it. To think that, would be to lose sight of human weakness, and the strife of human passions. We need strength to do the right, and to obey God; and so much the more strength, since, by reason of original sin, tumult and disorder lay waste the heart of man, which ever inclines to evil rather than to good.

This necessary strength to live as a good Christian, to avoid sin, and to practise Christian virtues, is given to us by God through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and it is this strength which we call GRACE. Without it, we could neither do right, nor avoid wrong, but with its help, we

are capable of doing all things and suffering all things in order to accomplish the will of God. Grace is to the soul what light is to the eyes; without the light we cannot see, but with the light we are enabled to perceive even dim and distant objects.

Grace is the internal and spiritual union of the soul with our Lord Jesus Christ; it is the indwelling of Jesus Christ in the soul, and the indwelling of the soul in Him. From the inmost recesses of our soul, as from the inmost recesses of His temple and His sanctuary, the Son of God gives to us the continual assistance of His Holy Spirit to enable us to repulse the attacks of the devil, our enemy and His, and to help us to observe all the commandments of God. He never abandons us to our own weakness; He never refuses us His grace; and when we sin, we alone are guilty of turning wilfully and deliberately away from God.

This union of the soul with Jesus Christ constitutes the true life of the soul. The life of the body springs from its union with the soul; and the life of the soul springs from its union with Jesus Christ, its Saviour and its God. And this life of the soul need never end, since, in heaven, we are destined to enjoy an eternal union with God, if we will but make the noblest use of our free-will whilst here on earth, and constantly endeavour to preserve the grace of God. And next, let us ask, in what manner is this grace bestowed upon us? and how is the mystical union of the soul with Jesus Christ accomplished? By prayer, and the holy sacraments.

We may compare the grace that is given us by God to the pure waters of a fountain, which flow for our benefit, through many different outlets. One of these channels, less important perhaps than the rest, but always open, would fitly represent prayer, to which we may have recourse under all circumstances; seven other jets of water, far more powerful, but less frequently resorted to, would well represent the seven sacraments.

Let us, then, constantly thirst for this divine water of grace, and thus, like true children of God, drink of the waters which Jesus will give, and which spring up into life everlasting.

THE BEST STATE.

VHICH is the best of all states? Out of a hundred or a housand, which is the best of all! Certainly it is not ıine; the work is too hard, and the profits too small. It ıust be that of a man, with an income of his own, and othing to do from morning till night but amuse himelf. To *weary* himself, you might add, from the mere ıct of having so little to do. No, that is not the best state ertainly. It is not the rank of a king or an emperor; overeigns are overwhelmed with hard and wearisome uties; it was a king who said sadly to one of his ministers hen he was complaining of the intolerable burden of his esponsibilities, "I am far more to be pitied than yourself, ıy friend; we are both of us condemned to hard labour; ut yours is only for a time, whilst mine is labour for life." o govern men is decidedly no easy task, and the best state f life is not the office of a king. Perhaps you will tell me t is the condition of a poor man? No, not that: I will olve the enigma. The best state is the *state of grace.* The tate of grace! and what is that? There is no patent for ny such profession? No, but this is something far better; he patent for all other callings is granted by the governıent, the patent of the state of grace is given by God, by he King of heaven and earth! He gives it gratuitously o all who desire it, and He never withdraws it until it is ıished for no more. With this patent, and in this admirble condition, men make a rapid fortune; they accumulate reasures which far surpass in value all the treasures of ankers, and millionaires, and the princes of this world; reasures which no one can take from us, and which are afely laid up where neither rust nor moth doth consume, nd where thieves do not break through nor steal. If that s the case, you say, I will certainly renounce my present alling, which is wearisome and far from lucrative, and nake choice of this excellent state which appears so onderfully desirable. That is well, nothing could be impler; you need not even give up your present calling n order to serve a new apprenticeship. The state of grace hich is given by God to those who love Him is compaible with all others, with one single exception: the state of

sin. And now you already understand to what I to lead you, and what the *state of grace* really is.] truth, the best of all states. It is that of a pure con at peace with God and itself; the happy state of which is not stained by any mortal sin, and is firm posed to remain a Christian soul, by the fulfilmen duties to God and man. The priest brings and pr to the world this precious gift of the *state of gra* bestows it for the first time in baptism, in which th is cleansed from original sin, admitted amongst Chr and made a child of God.

And, again, whenever during the course of our li are so unhappy as to fall from this holy state by re sin, the priest has the power to restore it to us by t don which he gives in the name of Jesus Christ, sacrament of penance.

Lastly, he presents to us, every day if we will, sacrament of Holy Eucharist, the mysterious food gives to our weakness strength to resist temptati to persevere in the state of grace. This is the stat liar to all true Christians. A Christian withou resembles a withered branch, which is no longer bear flowers or fruit. His works, however praise are utterly useless as far as heaven is concerned; t dead in the eyes of God, and consequently pas warded.

Sin, which separates the soul from God, is the d the soul; grace, which, on the contrary, unite God, is the life of the soul. A Christian, who d make it his chief care, before all other things, t a state of grace, both by avoiding sin, and by re with his whole heart if he has been so unhapp fall into it, is not worthy of the holy name he and does not comprehend the first word of the reli Jesus Christ.

Let us therefore question our own hearts, and sea own consciences. Are we in a state of grace? Si last confession and our last communion, have we God well? Have we prayed well? Have we k Sundays holy? Have we observed the comman of God, and of His Church? Have we not falle weakly into certain serious sins, which we had pr *ourselves* for the future to avoid?

If you only perceive a little dust, only a little human weakness, on the white robe of your conscience, thank God with all your heart, and renew your good resolutions to be ever pure and faithful. If, on the contrary, the holy robe of innocence is torn and defiled, like the prodigal son in the Gospel: call all your courage to your aid, rise, and full of confidence and true repentance, return unto your Father: go, and confess your sins; go, and regain the white robe, the holy robe of Christians, and then, with the help of God, strive never again to abandon that best and noblest state of life—the *state of grace.*

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

It is not enough to do the right; it is also necessary to do the right in the right way. In order to be a good Christian, to please God, and to go to heaven, an outward observance of the ten commandments of God, and the six commandments of the Church, is far from sufficient; it is also necessary to observe them with certain interior dispositions which we call the Christian spirit, or Christian virtue. No one is a Christian except upon this condition. The outward observance of the commandments is like the body of the Christian life: the Christian spirit is the soul of this body. A body without a soul is only a corpse and not a man. What, then, is this Christian spirit without which no one can be truly a child of God? It consists of certain dispositions or qualities which are called Christian virtues, and the possession of which renders men more and more like to Jesus Christ. Amongst these virtues the principal and most necessary are:

Humility, which consists in acknowledging willingly and thankfully that, since all the good we have comes from God, we cannot glory in anything, but should remember constantly that, if others seem to see in us any good or noble qualities, it is to God alone that praise and honour are due. For this reason, a man who is truly humble never esteems himself above others, but ever distinguishes between his own weakness and nothingness and the gifts that God has given him. Humility is the rarest and most difficult, as well as the most fundamental of all Christian

virtues. "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Meekness is that holy disposition which enables us to live, as in the sight of our Lord, in perfect peace, and to be full of sweetness and forbearance both to others and to ourselves, avoiding all manner of anger or strife. Meekness is the balm of life. If humility is the perfection of love to God, meekness is the perfection of love to man.

Patience is that Christian virtue which enables us to bear without murmuring, and even with joy, in union with our crucified Saviour, all the sufferings, injuries, persecutions, and trials of this present life. It is by patience that we may become in all things conquerors over ourselves; it is by patience that we may merit a participation in that glory which God prepares for His children as their everlasting reward.

The virtue of *poverty*, or detachment from all earthly goods, is that rare and holy disposition by which the heart becomes impervious to the love of riches, and all perishable things, and is ever lifted from earth to heaven, where the only real and lasting good is to be found. This spirit is as necessary and as possible to the rich as to the poor. A Christian may possess the merit of poverty in the midst of riches, if his heart is not attached to them; whilst he may be utterly destitute of it in the midst of all the privations of real poverty, if he have an excessive desire for the riches and comforts which God Himself withholds.

Chastity, or purity, is that Christian virtue by which all the disordered desires of the flesh become subject to reason and to the will of God, and which thus preserves the whole man in a state of holy innocence, and enables the soul to give itself to the service of God. Chastity of heart is the essential principle of chastity of body; the one guards it within, the other without. It is the most delicate and the most fragile of all virtues. It is above nature but not contrary to nature. It is to be observed in all states, although according to different degrees.

Obedience is that Christian virtue which subjects our will to the holy will of God, who is our only Lord and Master; and, for the sake of God, to the will of all our legitimate superiors, our ecclesiastical superiors, our civil superiors, and our domestic superiors. By obeying his superiors it is God Himself whom the Christian obeys, since all true

authority comes from God, who is alone the Lord of all things. It is the want of obedience which has produced all heresy and schism, and which has often given birth to revolutions.

All these virtues may be summed up in one alone, and that is Christian penance, viz., self-renunciation, constancy in mortifying, and repressing without ceasing all the corrupt inclinations of nature, to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ our Divine Model, and to live in accordance with the holy rules of the faith. If you do not do penance, said the Saviour, you shall all likewise perish. Lastly, the virtue which should crown, predominate, and give birth to all other Christian virtues is *divine charity*, or the love of God, and of Jesus Christ. To love Him, to serve Him from love, to suffer everything for His love, to love our brethren, our enemies, for love of Him: *this* is the perfection, *this* is the soul of the Christian's life. He is our God, and through Him alone can we reach heaven.

Blessed are they who seek to practise the virtues we have briefly pointed out. We will next consider the vices which have power to destroy these virtues. From life we will pass on to speak of death.

SIN AND VICES.

THE Christian life is the participation in the holiness of our Lord, our Divine Head, and great Example; sin and vice are the participation in the rebellion of the devil, the enemy of God and men. Sin is not the same thing as vice. Sin is to vice what the fruit is to the tree; what the effect is to the cause. Sin is a transitory act, vice is an evil disposition, a permanent state of the heart. They have one thing in common, they are both opposed to the Divine law. Sin must be either mortal or venial. Mortal sin is so decidedly guilty that it separates us from Jesus Christ, causes death to the soul, and draws down upon our heads the terrible judgments of God. Venial sin is a less grievous fault, of which the effect is to draw us away from God, without entirely separating us from His love. Mortal sin may be compared to death, and venial sin to sickness.

It is often difficult in practice, to be assured whether a sin is mortal or venial. For this reason both should be most carefully avoided. We may give, however, a few general rules by which a mortal sin may be distinguished :—

1. By a will set to do evil.
2. By a sufficient knowledge of the evil that is committed.
3. By a matter of certain importance, nevertheless, as the will is the principal agent in all questions of right and wrong, a grievous sin may unquestionably be committed by the *will* and the *desire* to commit it.

The vices which bring forth sin consist of certain evil dispositions, directly opposed to those Christian virtues of which we have been speaking. There are seven principal vices, which are, however, all of the same order or class.

Pride, the most fundamental of all vices, and the most at enmity with God, whose glory it does, in a manner, appropriate. Pride is that evil tendency to attribute to ourselves all the good that God has bestowed upon us, and to feel a certain amount of complacency in our own excellence, in our merits, in our good works, in our virtues ; it leads us to desire and to seek the praise of men, and renders us vain, susceptible, arrogant, ambitious, and selfish. Pride is the special sin of Satan, and the most dangerous of all vices.

Covetousness is an overweaning desire for worldly goods, and especially for money, which is the representative of earthly possessions, just as the virtue of poverty may be practised in the midst of riches, so is it possible to be very avaricious even although penniless, since avarice springs from the heart and not the purse. Covetousness must not be confounded with economy ; but people sometimes deceive themselves, and imagine they are economical, whilst they are in reality avaricious.

Lust, or impurity, is an inordinate love of carnal pleasures. This terrible vice, which brings with it both its shame and its punishment, is the most formidable enemy of society, and especially of youth.

Anger, which is the consequence of pride, is the vice which leads us to resent every species of contradiction, and which drives the peace of God from our souls.

Gluttony is the inordinate love of eating and drinking. The glutton does not eat to live, but lives to eat ; he does

not drink to allay his thirst, but drinks for the love of drinking. Drunkenness is the worst form of gluttony, and the most disastrous in its effects.

Envy is that utterly selfish and unchristian disposition which causes us to regard with regret the success and well-being of our neighbour. And lastly, *sloth* is that spiritual heaviness and torpor which renders us negligent and indolent in well-doing, which destroys in our hearts all fortitude and generosity, and causes us to turn with loathing from all laborious duties or wholesome self-exertion, whether in the service of God, or in the duties of our state of life.

These vices, which are also called the *deadly sins*, are the seven great roads which lead infallibly to hell, all who are mad enough to enter upon this downward journey. If we are already treading either of these paths, let us make haste to retrace our steps; this may be done by means of a contrary virtue. If we are proud, let us become humble; if we are passionate, let us become meek and patient; if we are covetous, let us become poor in spirit, and detached from the things of earth; if our lives are sinful and defiled, let us become pure and holy; if we are gluttonous and intemperate, let us become abstemious and sober; if we are envious, let us become charitable; if we are slothful and indolent, let us take courage, break the bonds of evil habits, and strive manfully to do the right.

To know, to detest, and to avoid all that is evil, to know, to love, and to practise all that is good, such is the summary of Christian morality, for the perfect fulfilment of which, let us remember, we must be actuated by one only aim—the desire to please God, and to obey the most holy laws of our Sovereign Lord and Master.

THE DECALOGUE.

HAVING now clearly defined the nature of *Christian morality*, we will go on to speak of that grand summary of the Divine law, which is called the Decalogue.

Decalogue means, in Greek, *the ten words*. It was God Himself who spoke these words to the human race, thus summing up the principal commandments which it is

necessary to observe in order to attain eternal life. These commandments are commonly called the *ten commandments of God.* Known, from the commencement of the world, to the ancient patriarchs, they were solemnly promulgated on Mount Sinai, from the midst of thunder and lightning, and transmitted to Moses for the chosen people of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ sanctioned them anew, and raised them to perfection by affixing to them the Divine precepts of the Gospel, and by embodying the whole in the two commands of love to God, and love to men. The three first of these ten commandments relate immediately to our duties to God; the other seven more directly concern our duties towards our neighbour and ourselves, nevertheless, all equally relate to God, for whose love, and by whose command, we must obey them.

Love of our neighbour would not be, in fact, a *religious* sentiment, if it had no connection with God, in whom alone all religion concentrates.

By the first commandment of God we are bound to adore Him as our Sovereign Lord and Master, the principal and the end of all things, as our Creator, and as the Holy of Holies; to believe in Him, and in all His words, because He is the Sovereign Truth; to hope in Him, because He is infinite goodness and infinite mercy; to love Him above all things, and to devote ourselves to His service, because He is the supreme good, perfection that knows no limit, and love that knows no end. We sin against this commandment by unbelief, by religious indifference, by the omission of prayer, and by negligence in the worship of God, by despair, and lastly by impiety.

The second commandment forbids us, not only to blaspheme the sacred and adorable name of God, but also to utter it without reverence, and in this command we must include the holy names of Jesus and of Mary.

By the third commandment we are bound to keep holy the seventh day of the week called Sunday, and, for this purpose, to rest from material (or servile) work, and to join with others in assisting together at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and to give ourselves up more especially to prayer and Christian works.—The non-observance of these three commandments is one of the scourges which has been chiefly instrumental in drawing down upon our century the strokes of Divine justice.

By the fourth commandment, the first of those which regulate our immediate duties to our neighbour and ourselves, we are bound to honour, love, and assist our father and mother, and to obey them, and all our lawful superiors, in everything that is not contrary to the law of God; to treat our equals and our inferiors with the same consideration that we ourselves desire, and to have respect to all men, remembering that they are, like ourselves, children of God, and brethren of Jesus Christ.

The fifth commandment forbids homicide, hatred, slander and vengeance, duels and conflicts, and all that can injure our neighbour in his life, in his body, and in his reputation. Anger is principally condemned by these words of the Decalogue.

By the sixth commandment we are bound to be ever chaste and pure in the sight of God and men. Our body does not belong to us; it belongs to God, who alone created it. This commandment is broken by evil thoughts wilfully consented to, by reading pernicious books, by licentious conversation, and, generally speaking, by all that is hurtful to holy purity.

The seventh commandment defends against all unjust attacks the possessions of another. It condemns theft, and every injustice which could in any way tend to deprive our neighbour of that which lawfully belongs to him.

The eighth commandment forbids all false testimony and lies. We owe the truth to our neighbour just as we owe it to ourselves. Lies that could injure our neighbours are the most serious of all. This sin is called calumny.

The ninth commandment forbids all sinful desires in everything that relates to purity; and in this prohibition it goes still further than the sixth.

Finally, the tenth and last commandment requires from us such a perfect respect for justice, that even a single unjust desire for the possessions of another should be banished from our heart.

Such are the ten great commandments which sum up the whole of morality, and of which the law of the gospel is but the perfect development.—"Keep the commandments, and you shall live," said our Divine Master to us all. "Hoc fac, et vives."

THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

In a previous explanation of the *Credo* we defined the Church as the great society of Christians, governed and sanctified by Jesus Christ, its Divine Pastor, and by the Pope and the Catholic Bishops, the visible representatives of this Divine Head. The commandments of the Church are those religious laws by which the Church is governed. The lawful Pastors of the Church have alone the right to command us thus in the name of God, since they are the sole inheritors of the ministry of St. Peter and the Apostles, and of the promises of Jesus Christ.

The Pope and the Bishops are men, it is true, but they are men invested with the Divine and priestly power of Jesus Christ, and therefore it is nothing but want of a right apprehension to say, as is sometimes said by those who consider themselves wonderfully advanced and enlightened: "I am quite willing to obey God, but certainly not men like myself."

We are all obliged, under pain of disobedience, which is more or less serious according to circumstances, to obey unquestioningly *all* the laws laid down for us by the Pope and the Bishops of our diocese. There are, however, six principal laws, which we are accustomed to regard more particularly as the commandments of the Church. These six regulate the sanctification of Sundays and Holidays of Obligation, public penance, and the frequentation of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. The two first command all Christians, who are not positively prevented, to keep holy all Sundays and Holy-days of Obligation—viz., the Circumcision, the Epiphany, the Ascension, Corpus Christi, Sts. Peter and Paul, the Assumption, All Saints, and Christmas Day. These feasts must be observed exactly like Sunday when they fall during the week. Every one must rest from service or manual work to devote the day more particularly to the service of God. The principal obligation imposed upon the faithful for the sanctification of Sundays and festivals is to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

The commandment by which the Church regulates the *public* penance of Christians relates to the days of fasting

and abstinence. The days of abstinence are all Fridays, and the Sundays in Lent; the fasting days are the forty days of Lent; certain Vigils; the Ember days; and in England the Wednesdays and Fridays in advent. To abstain is to go without meat. To fast is to eat but one full meal in the day. What is commonly called a collation is not intended as an additional repast, but only as a refection to ward off sickness and prevent weakness. Those who are really incapable are dispensed from fasting, but to act with a safe conscience every one should first consult their confessor, all, after the age of reason, are obliged to abstain on Fridays, and, after the age of twenty-one, to fast and abstain throughout Lent, upon the Ember Days, and on certain Vigils, or days preceding festivals. As these regulations are, however, different in different countries, it is necessary to follow in everything the commands of the Bishops of the diocese, which are always announced by the parish priest.

The two commandments of the Church relative to the sacraments oblige the faithful, under pain of mortal sin and excommunication, to confess at least once a year, as soon as they shall have reached the age of reason, and, when the priest shall find them capable of being instructed, to communicate at Easter: it is this that is commonly spoken of as the Easter duties.

It is better, far better, to approach much more frequently to the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist; but it is not a universal obligation except at the festival of Easter. If from negligence, or from some less culpable motive, any one should have been unable to fulfil this duty at the time fixed by the Church, the omission must be atoned for as quickly as possible, even though it should be already the end of the year. It need not be said that a bad confession and a sacrilegious communion do not satisfy this law of the Church.

How entirely the whole aspect of the world would change, if all rendered a faithful and willing obedience to the holy laws of the Church! It is almost impossible to obey them without quickly becoming a true Christian.

MOSES AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

In our childhood we all learned the wonderful history of Moses. This great servant of God was chosen to be the deliverer of the Hebrew race unjustly oppressed by the wicked in Egypt. Endowed with Divine power from on high, he worked such terrible and startling miracles before the *Pharaoh*, or King of Egypt, that he obliged this cruel prince to allow the four hundred thousand children of Israel whom he held in bondage to return to their own country. These miracles are known by the name of the *ten plagues of Egypt.*

They were worked in the sight of all the people, during a succession of months, and are so certain, so authentic, the incredulous have never been able, in spite of many efforts, to explain them away in any reasonable or justifiable manner.

In their passage from Egypt to Judea, the Israelites, conducted by Moses, came to the borders of the Red Sea, and we all know how the leader of God's people, in the name of the Creator, commanded the waters of the Red Sea to divide in order to allow the innumerable flock, which God had intrusted to his guidance, to pass through upon dry land.

On the third day of the third month after their departure from Egypt, they reached the foot of a mountain become for ever celebrated under the name of Mount Sinai. This was the place God had chosen in which to give to His people, and through His people to the whole world, that incomparable moral code which we call the Decalogue.

Moses, the friend of God, received the command to prepare all the people for this grand solemnity by a fast of three days. Barriers were placed at the foot of Mount Sinai, and the penalty of death was pronounced by the Lord Himself against him who should dare to pass this boundary without being called. At the commencement of the third day the holy mountain was suddenly enveloped in mysterious clouds, lightning surrounded it on all sides, and the whole people, in awe and trembling, heard the

voice of the Lord their God calling unto Himself His servant Moses. In obedience to the Divine voice, Moses passed the barrier, and ascended with humility and trust to the summit of Mount Sinai. There God deigned to speak to him as friend to friend. Moses passed forty days upon the mountain neither eating nor drinking; having strengthened himself previously with that Divine food by which the blessed Saints and Angels live eternally in heaven.

It was before this long communion with the Lord that there were given to the people of God those ten commandments, which comprehend the whole moral code of the ancient and also of the new alliance. God promulgated them Himself in the presence of all the people, who heard distinctly the voice of the Lord, the eternal Word, the Divine Truth who should one day become incarnate, and should thus dwell, one God amongst us, under the adorable name of Jesus.

I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not adore them nor serve them.

2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

3. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

4. Honour thy father and thy mother.

5. Thou shalt not kill.

6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

7. Thou shalt not steal.

8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.

10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.

Such is the Divine text of the commandments of God. The first three, as we have before said, relate more particularly to our duties towards God, and the other seven more especially to our duties towards our neighbour.

We will next give a simple explanation of each of these great commandments; and, in the meantime, let us earnestly endeavour to put them into practice, since it is

for this purpose that we are here on earth. One thing only is needful, and that is to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him; other duties may be good and desirable, but they can never be but of a *secondary* importance.

Who then is truly wise? and whose the life that most fully answers the great object of existence? The Christian; and the Christian's life: the life of the man who strives to accomplish the will of God, and to whom time is nothing worth, but as a means to gain eternity; whilst those who pass their days in pleasure, and in all manner of occupations, shutting God, as it were, out of their lives, must surely be possessed by some species of madness since they are content to lavish all their powers and capabilities upon the merest trifles, and to neglect the one sole object of creation—the noble end and holy aim for which they were born into the world.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

One day a doctor of the Jewish law questioned our Lord, asking Him which was the greatest of the commandments. Jesus answered him and said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy strength, and with all thy soul. This is the first and greatest commandment.

After an instant's reflection, this answer will appear very simple, and the ignorance or rather forgetfulness of this fundamental truth is a striking proof of the thoughtlessness of the age in which we live. Men think of everything before they think of God, they love everything before Him, or rather, instead of loving Him. From this indifference, which, although it is less detestable than utter impiety, is perhaps still more disastrous, springs the religion of those who fulfil their duties towards men, and seem to imagine that they have none to fulfil towards God. The chief defect in their religion is, that it happens to be no *religion* at all. Religion supposes before everything the worship of God, and in this pretended religion, men live as though there were no God; they do not think of Him, they do not render Him any worship, they do not *pray to Him*, and more than all, they do not love Him.

It is very right and very necessary to fulfil all the duties of social life, the natural duties of father, husband, son, and citizen, but that is not sufficient, and it is absolutely necessary that each one who desires to accomplish his destiny in this world, should live to God, and render to Him each day a tribute of adoration, prayer, devotion, obedience, and, more than all, of love. The service of God should be the one great interest in the life of every rational being; the love of God should be the first and principal emotion of the heart predominating over every other. If you ignore this rule you are no Christian, you are amongst the number of those who live for this world only, whilst your destiny is to live eternally and to use the world only as a means of reaching heaven.

Alas! how many pagans there are in the midst of us, how many Christians, who are Christians only by baptism and by name!

The first commandment of God is, perhaps, the most disregarded, and the least understood in our century; and yet it is the most important of all. It commands us to adore, to love, and to serve Him who gives us existence, who gives us the mind with which we think, the heart with which we love, the will with which we direct our life. God gives us all that we are, all that we have, our soul as well as our body; and, as He destines us for the possession of Himself in heaven, it is surely not hard to understand that He desires us to render Him in this world all the homage that is His due. This homage, this worship, is what we call religion. There is but one true religion, because there is but one God, and this true religion is the Christian or Catholic religion. It is therefore by being a good Christian, a good and faithful Catholic, that we may render to our Heavenly Father all that we owe Him, and by so doing, perfectly fulfil the designs and intention of God.

To *adore* God is to acknowledge Him as the infinite, supreme, eternal Being who made all things, and upon whom all things depend; it is to annihilate ourselves before His sovereign greatness, and to acknowledge, with deep humility, that all we have comes from Him, and that without Him we should not ever exist. We must adore God alone, because He alone is the Creator and the Sovereign Lord of all things. Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, must be adored because He is God as well as man. We may not adore the

Blessed Virgin, nor the Saints and Angels, still less their images. The Blessed Virgin, in fact, although the mother of Jesus Christ, and consequently the mother of God, is, nevertheless, only a simple creature of the great Creator whom alone we must adore. The Angels and Saints are only His servants, and it is entirely on account of the fidelity with which they have served Him, that we honour, love, and reverence them.

To adore any creature, no matter whom, in the place of God, or even at the same time as God, would be to commit a horrible and abominable sin which is called *idolatry*. The Catholic Church has already destroyed idolatry throughout Europe, and in many parts of the other continents: her missionaries brave martyrdom and death only to destroy idolatry throughout the earth, and to restore to Jesus Christ, who is the true and living God, the homage unjustly paid to false divinities.

To serve God is to do His holy will in every action of life: it is to be to Jesus Christ just what a good and faithful servant is to his master. He cares for his master's interests, carries out his orders to the best of his power, defends him when he is attacked, never suffers any one to speak ill of him, seeks to please him in all things, and to avoid everything which could offend him. Behold what it is to serve God; even so is He served by good and faithful Christians, by men who are devoted to Jesus, and who clearly discern the end for which they are on earth.

The service of God is the great object of life, the one paramount duty and interest of man.

To love God is to feel that He is in truth our heavenly Father, and to render Him a heart which ever beats with that Divine emotion which He Himself has given us, and which we call love. Cold and ungrateful beyond words must be the nature which feels no love for Jesus, who is infinite perfection, infinite goodness, all tenderness and mercy, and ineffable sweetness. To love God is to commence on earth what we shall continue eternally in heaven. It is impossible that we should even possess true peace, true joy, or true happiness without this love by which the whole life is purified and ennobled.

If we love God, let us prove our love in every word and action. "If you love Me," He says to us in the gospel, "*keep* My commandments." If we love God, let us often

think of Him with joy and with tenderness; let us often say to Him: "My God, I love Thee above all things." Let us mingle this feeling of love for God with our most ordinary actions, and do everything with the habitual desire to please Him, and to accomplish His holy will.

To *adore* God, to *love* Him, and to *serve* Him: such is the spirit of the first commandment.

PRAYER.

We cannot be Christians, or please God without His grace, that is to say, without being united to Jesus Christ His Son; and this grace, this life-giving union, we can only obtain by prayer and the holy sacraments.

What, then, *is* prayer? How many people are mistaken upon this point, and, counting as prayer that which is very far from being prayer, imagine that to serve God and to pray to Him it is necessary to have nothing else to do, to go to church all day long, and a thousand other things quite out of *question* for any man who is obliged to gain his living by untiring work day after day!

To *pray* is to think of God by loving Him, adoring Him, thanking Him for all His benefits, and asking from Him with confidence all the graces which we need.

Prayer is an act of the heart and of the mind, which is possible under all circumstances, in the midst of work, and of all the different occupations in which we may be employed. What can prevent us whilst we are going and coming in the streets and in the fields, whilst we are engaged in the labours of our calling, in the morning when going to our work, in the evening when returning from it; during the night when we awake, from lifting our heart and thoughts to Jesus Christ ever present in the depths of the soul, and from saying to Him: My God, I love Thee and adore Thee. I unite my work and all my cares to Thy sufferings. Pardon my sins; have pity on my weakness. Bless my work, and teach me to love Thee; or any such simple and heart-felt prayers as these. And I can assure you, moreover, that these are the best of all prayers, that they are those to which God listens with most pleasure,

because they are more natural, and because they express the truest, deepest feeling of Religion.

Those formulas of prayer which are called *vocal prayers*, and which are to be found in works of devotion, are very useful means of rousing our hearts to prayer; but, we must not forget that these are not *true* prayers, unless we lift the heart, as well as move the lips, when we are engaged in reciting them. It is well to use them, but we must only use them as a means of praying better. What is the good of praying? people sometimes say. Does not God know my wants without my telling Him? Yes, God does know all we need. But not only does He desire that we should tell Him all our wants and cares, as children to their father, and as servants to their master, but, more than this, we know well that prayer does not merely consist of asking from God just what we need for soul and body. For this is only the least sublime part of that great act which we call prayer. More than all else, to pray is to *adore* God, it is to offer the profound homage of creatures who only exist by His Almighty power, of servants who are only placed on earth to render Him their service and to accomplish His holy will, of children whom He loves as a most tender father, and who returns Him love for love.

Love and adoration—these are the two principal acts of prayer, and the very foundation of the Christian life.

Not only must we *adore* God and *love* Him, but we must also pray to *thank* Him for all the benefits with which He overwhelms us, and especially for the love with which He deigns to regard us, and for the happiness which He prepares for us, if we are faithful to Him. This act of thanksgiving is again superior to an act of supplication. Lastly, amongst all supplications, properly so-called, there is one with which none of us can dispense, and that is the supplication we offer up to God to obtain the *pardon of our sins*, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our most merciful Saviour.

It is therefore necessary to pray, to think often of God, and often to express the love and reverence with which our hearts are filled. But it is especially needful to pray in the morning and in the evening; at the commencement of the day which God has given us, to consecrate it all to Him, and at the end of the day, to thank Jesus for the graces He has given us during the course of it, and to

ask His forgiveness of the sins we have perhaps committed.

And let us never forget to pray when we are tempted to do wrong; prayer at such a time resembles the shield with which the warrior arms himself in order to resist the attacks of the enemy. Lastly, let us always pray with *attention* and *reverence*, with *confidence*, *humility*, and *perseverance*. He who prays not thus prays badly, and is not heard by God. When we are reciting prayers, the rosary for instance, let us be very careful to pray with the spirit of recollection, with the heart and mind ever lifted up to God, and not merely with the movement of the lips. May our Divine Lord and Saviour grant you the grace of prayer, cause you to love it, and to find the practice of it sweet and easy! You will derive from it the sanctification of your life, purity of heart, the secret of true joy, and the only consolation in sorrow; and, with the help of prayer, you will become a true servant of God.

FAITH AND PATIENCE IN PRAYER.

We must pray, it is the command of God; it is the clearly expressed will of our Lord Jesus Christ. The man who prays saves his soul; he who does not pray lives without God, is no Christian, and will assuredly be lost.

But it is not enough to pray, we must pray with faith and perseverance. Sometimes men will begin to pray; but being fully persuaded that divine things are governed by the same law as human things, they immediately desire to find the answer to their prayer close within their reach. Seeing no result, they imagine that their prayer is useless, and thus fall into a state of discouragement. They do not know that prayer is an act of *faith*, and requires before all things that men should believe in its power, even when they perceive no immediate effects. How many earnest prayers, fully heard by God, have produced no fruits for a very long time, and sometimes not until after centuries! At the last judgment, this mystery will be revealed to us, and we shall then see the marvellous effects that have been worked by Christian prayer.

Think of the prayer of St. Stephen, when he was being

stoned. This prayer wrought the conversion of St. Paul, who was yet a Jew, and who took charge of the garments of his persecutors. Now imagine all the good that was done by St. Paul, who converted whole nations, by preaching the Christian religion throughout the world, and by instructing the faithful. And yet, may not all the good of which St. Paul was the author, and which is still developing century after century, be clearly traced back to St. Stephen, who by his prayer changed the persecutor into an apostle. Thus, your prayers may perhaps be asked for the conversion of some young man who is living a very wild and reckless life. For this end, you pray with all your heart, recite several chaplets, visit some sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin, and make one or two good communions; after a certain length of time, very often without your knowledge, and even after your death, this young man returns to God, gives himself up to good works, cares for the poor, goes still further and becomes a priest or a missionary, converts a great number of souls, and during the course of a long life, does an immense amount of good. And is not all this the fruit of your prayer, that prayer of which you were never able to see any effects, and which you were perhaps tempted to regard as useless. It is to you, and to your prayers, that this young man owes his conversion, and you will share his reward. How great the loss, if you had not prayed, or if you had prayed badly! Mothers of families, you have asked of God, in all your daily prayers, the gift of perseverance for your sons and daughters in the path of holiness. Now, looking down the stream of time, behold them, grown up, and married, and becoming in their turn the fathers and mothers of families, then bringing up their children in the right and Christian way; children, who shall, later on, become themselves the centre of Christian homes, and thus, ever on, in endless succession. Mark the power of your prayer which reaches unto numerous generations. Sometimes God appears to refuse what we ask of Him. Patience! the day will surely come in which we shall reap the hidden fruits of every holy effort, fruits of great sanctification for ourselves, for the long-continued prayer, apparently so barren, shall have caused us to persevere and to advance in holiness; and then, on the other hand, who can tell from how many sins, from how many occasions of falling, we may have saved the object of our

ayers, although a perverse will may still form an obstacle the path of complete conversion?

When we ask for our neighbour temporal good, health, riches, or deliverance from some great calamity, there yet one other striking reflection to be made. This sickss, this life of poverty, this grief, is precisely the means ıde use of by God to save the *soul* of him for whom you ay. Then is it not necessary for his true good, which is ıown to God far better than to you, that you should t obtain what you ask? Will your prayers therefore be ıt? Far from it; they are, first for yourself, and then r your neighbour, an abundant source of graces far perior to those temporal blessings for which you have ked.

We might easily multiply examples, but the little we ve said will suffice, I hope, to reanimate your faith in ayer. Pray with confidence; pray with deep human mpathy, and do not forget the counsel we have given ıen you lift your heart in prayer to God.

THE GREAT MISSION OF PRAYER.

HEN Jesus desired to establish His Church in this world, e chose twelve poor fishermen; and it was by instruents as weak as these, and as apparently ineffectual, at He willed to convert men, and that He did, in fact, nvert them.

Just what Jesus did in the beginning, He does still, each y; and He gives to every one amongst us, however weak d insignificant we may be, a divine mission in the midst His Church.

He intrusts His interests to us, He desires that we ould all work for His glory, by procuring the salvan of our brethren. It is true that we ourselves are ly very unworthy sinners, and it seems as if our own aknesses and failures were so manifold that they might ıll prevent us from troubling about the salvation of hers. And yet God requires of us that we should try to ve our brethren. What then shall we do? Shall we go d preach in the public places? If we are workmen, serents, *labourers, shall* we leave our workshops, and our

work, and exhort all sinners to do penance? Decidedly *this* is not what God expects of us. What then shall we do? Listen: *we must pray.* It is by prayer that we can accomplish our work. We must pray for each other, this is the command of God, and the teaching of the apostle St. Paul. This is a truth often forgotten in these days, and the self-interest which pervades and intermingles with all that we do is very often the cause of the little progress that we make in the service of God. How many amongst the faithful lament that they do not advance in virtue, that they gain no greater mastery over their passions, over their evil inclinations, over their self-love! They stand to-day just where they stood last year, and thus they grow discouraged. This is entirely because they are selfish, and only think of themselves when they pray. One would imagine, that beyond their own narrow limits there was nothing which concerned the glory of Jesus Christ. They never pray for their neighbour, and this want of charity hardens the heart and closes it against the grace of God.

If we did but consider the first words of our daily prayer: *Our Father*, that alone would suffice to remind us that we are all members of one great family, and that, consequently, the good of our brethren should be to us even as our own. We do not say, *My* Father, who art in heaven, . . . give *me my* daily bread . . . forgive *me* my trespasses. . . . But, by the command of God Himself, we say, *Our* Father, give *us* . . . forgive *us*. . . . Is it not clear that God, by teaching us to pray in this manner, desired us to have at heart the interests of all men, who are His children, and our brethren.

Sometimes we do not know what to say to God when we desire to pray. Yet subjects for prayer are far from wanting. Think, for instance, who has greater need of assistance than our Holy Father the Pope, who is intrusted by Jesus Christ to govern the whole Church, and to decide all great questions relating to the glory of God? And whence is this assistance to come, if not from the prayers of those who belong to his great spiritual family? Must not the son always endeavour to help and comfort the father? I would say as much of all bishops, priests, and missionaries, and especially of the bishop of your own diocese, and of the priest of your own parish who is charged

by the bishop to teach the law of God, thus enabling you to avoid sin, and to save your soul, by becoming a true Christian. If the faithful of every diocese and every parish had but more charity and greater earnestness, if they prayed every day for the conversion of the irreligious, for the perseverance of their brethren in the faith, do you not believe that the efforts of our priests would be crowned with greater success, and that God would be better served?

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Pray therefore, pray much, and pray often for the Pope, for bishops, and for priests; pray for the conversion of sinners, and for the sanctification of the just, especially for those of your own country, of your parish, and of your own family. Who can tell that the salvation of your father, of your mother, of your husband, or your wife, of your child, or of your friend, does not hang upon that prayer which you are tempted to neglect? We shall one day learn, with deep confusion and bitter grief, how many souls we might have saved by the simplest means and by the easiest prayers: then the time will be past. Now that you have still the power, begin at once, and make reparation for the time you have lost. Determine that you will always add to your morning and evening prayers some special prayer for your neighbour; a memorare, for instance, or even a decade of the rosary, for the Pope, for your bishop, for your parish priest, and for your confessor; for success to the preaching of missionaries over the whole earth, for the conversion of Protestants who do not know the true religion; pray for your country, and for those who govern it, that God may guide them in the right way, give them wisdom, and bless their efforts for the public good.

Believe me, if you will but pray thus, you will soon know by experience how good and useful it is to think of others, and to cultivate a universal sympathy; God will bless you, and will give you many great graces which you would not obtain, if, with a selfishness that is only too common, you thought of no one but yourself in your prayers.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

THE second commandment God gave Himself upon Mount Sinai to His servant Moses; and when He came to dwell amongst us, the God of heaven and earth renewed this self-same law: "Swear not at all," He says in the Gospel, "but let your speech be Yea, yea; No, no: and that which is over and above these is of evil." And in the beautiful prayer which He Himself bequeathed to the world, Jesus commanded that, before all else, the sacred name of God should be hallowed and glorified: "Hallowed be Thy name!"

It is not necessary to insist upon the entire reasonableness of this divine law. Since God is the infinitely perfect Being, unutterably worthy of the deepest reverence and adoration, the very least that we can do is to speak with reverence His holy name. To pronounce the name of Jesus heedlessly, is to speak heedlessly of God Himself; to insult, blaspheme, or curse this adorable name, is to insult and curse the Lord. What could be more guilty? What could be greater madness? It is the vessel of potter's clay rebelling against the hand that formed it.

There are many different ways of sinning against the second commandment. The most grievous is that of which we have just spoken, viz., an outrage, or malediction uttered openly against God. This crime, for which in the ancient law, men were immediately condemned to death and stoned, is, thank God, exceedingly rare. It is very seldom that even those who are so carried away by passion as to utter *words* of blasphemy do really *intend* to curse God. If ever in the streets, or in your workshops, or in any company that you frequent, you should hear any of these terrible maledictions, never forget, if you are powerless to silence the blasphemer, to lift your heart to God, and to offer to Him a prayer of reparation; saying to Him, My God, may Thy holy name be blessed and glorified; forgive them, for they know not what they do!

There is a great difference between *blasphemy* and *swearing* by the name of God. A blasphemy is far more guilty than an oath, although the latter is most reprehensible. An *oath* consists of taking the name of God *in vain;* but a

blasphemy implies a clear outrage, a direct insult, unless it is not truly uttered with a deliberate intention of evil; an undoubted blasphemy is a grievous sin, whilst an oath seldom reaches an equal degree of guilt. The workmen of the present day have almost all very evil habits in this respect. They drag the name of God into their common conversation, as if this forbidden word gave effect and piquancy to their discourse. There are those with whom this evil habit is so deeply rooted that they can scarcely speak a single sentence without bringing in the name of God. Parents and masters, who suffer their children to fall into this coarse and impious language, are deeply guilty, and will have to answer for it before God. If you should be amongst the number of those who have contracted such a habit, strive hard to correct yourself of it. Every day, when you say your morning prayer, renew your resolution not to swear; and if, by misfortune, you forget yourself, ask forgiveness of God directly you have perceived your fault. With a firm will and a little perseverance you will soon cease to swear at all.

Any one may be guilty of blasphemy without positively reviling the holy name of God. Hence, it would be a blasphemy to accuse God of cruelty or injustice, or even to say that God does not trouble Himself about us, but abandons us to ourselves. Sometimes an excess of despair will cause us to give vent to words of this description, and they would constitute a very grievous sin if ungovernable grief did not partly excuse them. It would also be an utter blasphemy to say to a *creature*, when under the influence of passion, that you loved them more than God, that, for you, they held the place of God; or any mad words of this description, which may sometimes be met with in dangerous romances.

It is a blasphemy to revile religion, or the things of God; to rail, for instance, against the Blessed Sacrament, or the worship of the Blessed Virgin, or against images and the relics of the saints; to turn into derision the words of holy Scripture, religious doctrines, or the ceremonies of divine worship. Blasphemy is a sin which is more or less grievous according to circumstances, and the sanctity of the object blasphemed. There are many expressions familiar amongst people who have been badly brought up, the use of which does not certainly always involve sin,

but which Christians should never allow themselves to utter.

Remember and practise these rules. Reverence with your whole heart all that relates to the Lord your God, and never lose sight of the second commandment of the divine law:—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

In 1849, a terrible storm broke over the town of Toulouse. In the midst of it, two men might have been seen coming out of the door of a well-known public-house, of which they were constant habitants. It was evident that they had been drinking much too freely, and they were now engaged in a noisy discussion upon different religious questions. They both prided themselves on their liberal opinions, and gloried in the name of free-thinkers; and as they walked on through the storm, the thunder which rolled incessantly over their heads, seemed to lash them up into a kind of senseless fury. Blasphemies of every description came from their lips, until at last, one of them even dared to lift his clenched hand threateningly to heaven: "I defy Thee," he cried out, "strike me if Thou canst." The words were barely uttered, when the lightning flashed, and struck him where he stood, and stretched him motionless upon the earth. His terrified companion cast himself upon his knees, and prayed aloud for mercy; and when he had recovered from his fright, he placed his companion on his shoulders and carried him to a house close by, where he returned to consciousness after many hours. We do not know whether he profited by this lesson, but it must be acknowledged that it would have been difficult for God to give one more prompt or more significant.

ON BLASPHEMY.

Let us consider, for a few minutes longer, this subject of blasphemy; this miserable offence to which you could perhaps bear witness every day, and almost every hour in the day. To blaspheme is to insult God; it is to rebel, in words, against Him. It is possible to blaspheme against God both directly and indirectly. *Directly*, by reviling God Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ; and *indirectly, by reviling* religion, and the things of God. All this, alas!

is the order of the day, in our workshops and our houses, in our streets and in our public places!

I. God may be blasphemed in many ways. 1st., By attacking His adorable perfections; by saying, for instance, that there is no God, or rather, that God is cruel, unjust; He requires more from me than from others; He cares nothing about me; there is no such thing as Providence, all of which clearly attacks the existence, justice, goodness, and wisdom of God. 2d. By uttering any kind of imprecations against God, or by cursing Him in any possible way. It is, again, a direct blasphemy against God to deny the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; to say of Him, that He is a man like other men; that He is only a great philosopher; that He did not rise again; that He is not really present in the Blessed Sacrament, and other similar assertions.

All oaths, when considered in connection with the passion which prompts such words, and the scandal which is given to all who hear them, may easily constitute a very grievous sin.

To blaspheme in this manner, is to use the language of hell, and to serve as an organ to the devil, the prince of blasphemers, the great teacher of all who rebel against God.

And let no one say that when they thus speak the name of God, they do not intend to outrage, or to wish Him evil; that it is not against *Him* that they cry out; but against men, against animals, against work, &c. That these are only mere words without any meaning, mere ebullitions of temper. In order to be guilty of blasphemy, it is not at all necessary to have a fixed intention to outrage God, and to attack Him; it is quite sufficient to utter blasphemous words, of which the meaning is always understood, and which are perfectly well known to be sinful. Besides, this detestable habit perpetuates itself, and passes from mouth to mouth, from fathers to their children, from masters to their apprentices, from comrade to comrade, and sometimes even to women and young girls. Is it possible to imagine a greater evil?

And then, who does not know that these frightful words are injurious to God? Who does not know that they are strictly forbidden? Who does not know that they offend God grievously? And where is the blasphemer who omits

to accuse himself of them in confession, as of a grievous sin, when, returning to better feelings, he seeks reconciliation with his Father and his God.

II. An *indirect* blasphemy is committed against God by reviling religion, and speaking of holy things with scorn, hatred, or derision; by saying, for instance (and this even without really *thinking* it), that religion is only an invention of the priests; that it is worth nothing; that confession is only good for women and children; that there is no occasion to confess to a priest, but that it is enough to confess to God; that the Protestant religion is as good and better than the Catholic religion; that all religions are good, &c. It is also blasphemy against religion to speak scoffingly of the laws of the Church, of the Pope, of the bishops, of priests; of the holy ceremonies of religion, of her ancient customs, and to treat them as superstitious; to pretend that the Gospel contains absurd or impossible things; all such remarks outrage the majesty of the one true God, since they outrage the Christian religion, which is His noblest work, since they outrage those sacred truths which He has Himself revealed to the world—*He*, our God, who can neither lie nor err!

III. Blasphemy is, from its very nature, the most fearful of all sins. It is a direct outrage against God Himself.

In the law of Moses, revealed by the Lord upon Mount Sinai, blasphemy was immediately punished by death. The blasphemer was dragged without the camp or town, and stoned. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, having blasphemed in the presence of his army, God, in order to demonstrate forcibly to the Hebrew people the greatness of this crime, sent an angel, who exterminated the guilty king with his whole army, consisting of a hundred and eighty-five thousand men.

Saint Louis, king of France, notwithstanding his gentleness and his forbearance, caused a law to be passed condemning blasphemers to have their tongues pierced with a red hot iron Men, having grown less anxious about the interests of God's glory than about their own, have now for a long time ceased to punish blasphemy; but this crime is still the same in the sight of God, who does not change as we do, and will sooner or later avenge the holiness of His *great* name which is thus unworthily outraged. He is *patient*, because He is eternal.

I would say to all who read these lines, Abhor and detest blasphemy. Fight against it, both in yourself and in others. If you have this frightful habit, attack it with all the energy of a true heart; if you only have the *will*, you will succeed in conquering it far more easily, and far more quickly than you think. Shall I tell you a simple remedy which has cured many of this same disease, and amongst others an honest trooper, thirty-five years old, who had not yet made his first communion, and who swore . . . *like a trooper!*

1st. Every time that you blaspheme, and that you hear any one else blaspheme, say in your heart, My God, forgive me (or forgive him); may Thy holy name be blessed! and renew your resolution never to blaspheme again.

2nd. Go to confession; confession is that great dispensary in which the physician of souls—the priest of Jesus Christ—ever holds in reserve, and gives freely the priceless remedy which cannot fail to heal all who desire to be healed. Learn by heart these two short paragraphs; if faithfully practised, they are worth their weight in gold.

A CERTAIN REMEDY FOR THE HABIT OF BLASPHEMY.

EVERY one knows, if not by their own personal experience, at least by contact with others, what blasphemy is.

This deplorable vice, this grievous sin, is, alas! only too common.

There are many people who will say regretfully, when reproved for blasphemy, "Yes, you are right; it is wrong, very wrong to swear! it must be an offence, a gratuitous offence against God; but I cannot help myself, I have fallen into the habit of it, and I cannot correct myself. I should be very glad never to swear again, but that is impossible." Listen to this true story, and then I am sure you will be quite convinced that it is just as possible to correct one's self of blasphemy as of any other evil habit. There was living at Paris a certain brave general, who had never been known to shrink from an enemy, and who had, likewise, never been known to shrink from an oath. And what oaths! if words had been missiles

he might have put a whole army to flight. This general grew old; but whilst he lost the health, the strength, and the activity of youth, he tenaciously preserved the habit of swearing. Now this was a frequent source of regret to the worthy man, for he had always secretly retained those Christian sentiments which age and suffering had now successfully reanimated, and whilst desiring to return to a practice of religion, he found that this unfortunate habit formed an obstacle which still separated him from God.

In the meanwhile he was seized by a violent attack of gout, which caused him severe suffering, and laid him up for many days; he therefore decided to seek the attendance of one of those holy religious who consecrate themselves with such wonderful devotion to the care of the sick; and that very evening found one of the sisters of the "Bon Secours" fairly established by the general's arm-chair.

In the shortest possible time he gave vent to an oath of the most startling description. The good sister was quite overcome. The familiar language of the barracks was an unknown tongue to her. *She* had never lived but in her convent; and in such barracks as those, God is spoken of in a rather more reverent manner. Nevertheless, she was a woman of sense, so she quickly recovered herself, and scolded the general just as these holy sisters *can* scold.

"Well, what would you have, my good sister?" said the general, slightly confused. "I cannot help swearing, it is a habit of thirty years' standing, and it would be utterly useless for me to try to give it up." "We will see," answered the sister, smiling. "I have heard, I think, that there is no such word as *impossible* in our language. At all events, it is not a Christian word when applied to a duty that must be done. But, general, if you truly desire to cure yourself of your habit of swearing, I will tell you a way to succeed. But, first, do you truly wish to do so?" "Eh! certainly I do." "Do you promise to submit to the treatment I shall order you?" "Yes, I promise." "On the word of a general." "On the word of a soldier." "Well, this is what I prescribe for you as the only remedy. Every time that you happen to swear or to blaspheme, you shall give me five shillings for my poor." "Five shillings for every oath," exclaimed the general, bounding out of his chair, "why, I shall be ruined." "You have promised, general," *answered* the sister, laughing, "and I am not going to let

you off. Besides, it only depends upon yourself; do not swear, and you will have nothing to pay." "Do not swear; it is all very well to talk like that. Ah! these religious, they imagine you can do anything. A very pretty remedy you have fixed upon! You will see that, thanks to your contrivance, I shall die in the hospital."

The general said a great deal more; but he had promised on the word of a soldier, and nothing remained for him but to keep his word. At the first violent pain which his gout caused him, he gave vent to one of his usual oaths.

"That is five shillings that you owe me, general," said the sister calmly. "Where do you keep your money?"

The poor general showed her the key of his writing-desk, and as he heard the sister counting out the five shillings for her poor, he groaned inwardly, and muttered to himself: "Confound it, I have forgotten the agreement already; another time I will be more careful."

Half an hour after, a second paroxysm, and a second oath; but this time the general never got to the end, but stopped short half way, thinking of the five shillings he was going to lose. However, as the worst part was said, he was obliged once more to pay the fine agreed upon. At the third attack he thought that ten shillings was quite enough to lose for one evening, and restrained himself so successfully that he had scarcely begun the first syllable of the fatal oath. At the fourth attack he did not utter a word, but contented himself with clasping his hands and groaning.

The next day, and the day after, he forgot from time to time, but as he always paid so heavily for his forgetfulness, the oaths grew further and further apart, and on the fourth day he did not swear at all. He had lost more than two pounds, which the good sister had gained for her poor people, but he was cured of his deplorable habit. A little time after he made his confession, and from that time he entirely ceased to swear, or at least so rarely and so little, that it is not worth speaking of; which proves, that those who wish well always find it possible to fulfil their duties, and to correct their vices; that they can break through the habit of swearing and blaspheming as well as any other vice, and that, to succeed in this, nothing more is needed than that they should be as much afraid of offending God as of losing five shillings.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

God desired to preserve the true religion in a world which grew ever more and more corrupt, and therefore He chose for Himself a people to whom He gave certain special commandments.

Amongst these there was one which predominated over all the others, and the observance of which was designed to recall to man his entire dependence upon God. Whoever violated this commandment was punished with death; he was dragged, as one accursed, without the walls of the town, and, by the order of God Himself, was stoned to death.

This great commandment was the sanctification of the seventh day of the week. Upon that day the faithful were forbidden to employ themselves in any manual work; and they were bound to consecrate this day of bodily rest to special prayer, to the worship of God, to reading and meditation on the divine Word.

In the ancient law, this day of sacred repose, the day of the Lord, was the Saturday, and not, as with us, the Sunday. The Saturday had been chosen by God, in remembrance of the creation of the world, which had been completed in six days; on the seventh day, which answers to the Saturday, the divine work had ceased, and it was in memory of this rest of the Lord that the Jews were to celebrate the Saturday.

In the new law, Sunday has been substituted for Saturday, even as the Christian Church has been substituted for the Jewish Church. Sunday is indeed a day far greater and more holy, and the mysteries that it recalls are still more worthy of gratitude than the glorious mystery of creation.

On Sunday our divine Redeemer rose from the dead, victorious by this crowning miracle over death and sin and Satan; and it was on Sunday that He solemnly instituted His Church, by sending down upon her the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. By the sanctification of Sunday, Christians consecrate to God, in accordance with the primitive law, one day in the week; and they continually revive in their hearts the remembrance of those

mysteries of love by which the Son of God wrought the redemption of the human race.

Sundays, and also the holidays of obligation, are observed by the practice of two principal rules:—1st, by hearing mass; and 2nd, by resting from servile works.

I.—By hearing mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, under pain of mortal sin. The mass, which is the unbloody sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the principal action, and the centre, as it were, of all divine worship. It is the great prayer of the Christian religion; it is the one supreme act of adoration and thanksgiving which we render to God through Jesus Christ His Son.

In parishes where there are many priests, and consequently many masses, the obligation is satisfied by hearing low mass. But as the high mass is the common gathering of all the children of God at the feet of their Heavenly Father, every one should be present unless positively prevented; and so much the more because this mass is said for the faithful of the parish, and it is at this alone that all recommendations, public prayers, announcements, and publications are made, and that a sermon or instruction is given.

It is necessary to hear the whole of the mass from the beginning to the end. Those who enter the church after the reading of the Gospel do not satisfy the obligation, and are bound to hear another mass. Those who arrive after the mass has begun, but before the Gospel, do certainly fulfil the command of hearing mass, but they commit a fault unless their delay was involuntary.

To observe this precept in the right way, it is necessary to behave becomingly during the holy sacrifice, to pray to God, and, in a word, to conform a serious act of religion. It is also forbidden to laugh, to look about, and even to speak without necessity in church.

Any one who chattered or slept during the whole of mass, or during a considerable part of it, would not fulfil the law, and would be obliged to assist with more devotion at another mass. Vespers, benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the sermon, and other public devotions, are not positively commanded, but it is far better not to neglect them, and they offer the best means of keeping holy the Sundays and festivals. It is a very happy thing to see the faithful gathered together in great numbers in the church,

lifting up both heart and voice, with one accord, in praise to God, and thus, by one united prayer, drawing down upon their parish heavenly benedictions. Parents and masters should accustom children to assist at the different offices of the Church with reverence and devotion. Who does not love to hear the pure fresh voices of little children lifted up to God in singing psalms and hymns?

II. In order to keep holy Sundays and holy days, it is not sufficient to go to mass, or even to go to mass and vespers; it is also necessary to abstain from *servile work*. By *servile work* is especially understood the labour in which workmen, tradesmen, and day-labourers are engaged, since that is quite incompatible with the holy rest of the Sunday. Work which only occupies the mind, such as reading, &c., is not servile work, and is, consequently, not forbidden. Neither does the commandment forbid that work which is necessary for the maintenance of life, nor that which is required for the ceremonies of divine worship. Thus servants may conscientiously perform all their necessary duties, and those who are employed about a church may clean and put it in order, arrange the altars, ring the bells, &c.

With the exception of the necessaries of life, it is also forbidden to buy and sell on Sundays and holy days. All shops should be closed, except chemists, inns, butchers, grocers, bakers, and, generally speaking, all shops of provisions; also every one must be able to go to church, the person who keeps the house being alone exempt.

Still, as it is impossible to provide for all cases, and as the practice of these rules must vary according to country and circumstances, it is always necessary to be guided by the opinion of a priest in any case of doubt or uncertainty. Masters or mistresses who, without real necessity, prevent those in their employment or service from hearing mass, and who oblige them to work, commit a very grievous sin, and are responsible before God for the omission, as well as for the scandal they have caused.

The non-observance of this law is one of the scourges of our time, and if we do not make a successful effort against this lamentable disobedience, the justice of God will assuredly fall heavily upon us. The Lord no longer condemns the disobedient to be stoned, but He prepares for them a *terrible* judgment, and the eternal punishment of hell.

God is not mocked with impunity! sooner or later He asserts His sovereignty as the Lord and Master of the whole earth.

Therefore, render a heartfelt obedience to this great and holy law, and keep this third commandment of God deeply engraven on your memory. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day."

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

Our Lord said to us all on the day before His Passion, "I have given you an example, that as I have done so you do also." He is not only our Lord and Saviour; He is also our perfect example. Amongst all the holy virtues of which He left us a pattern, there is one which He practised during the whole of His life, and the imitation of which is, for that reason, imperative upon all Christians: His reverence and obedience towards His mother and His adopted father. During His childhood, His youth, and even in His manhood, Jesus was subject in all humility to Mary and to Joseph; and during the thirty years He passed at Nazareth, the Gospel tells us nothing of Him except that He was subject to His parents. "*Et erat subditus illis.*"

Our Lord thus practised the fourth commandment in the law of God His Father: "Honour thy father and thy mother." Like Him we should honour our parents, that is, we should reverence them, and obey them, assist them in all their necessities, and surround them with care and affection. Let us reverence our parents, let us *always* reverence them, and never lose sight of the fact that they are the authors of our life, and that to them is intrusted the paternal authority of God Himself. A father and a mother should be always regarded with the deepest reverence; in their relations to their children they are invested with an inviolable truly sacred character, being representatives of the fatherhood and the providence of God. In the ancient law, he who struck or cursed his father or mother was considered as guilty of sacrilege, and, by the order of God, was punished with death. Even when our parents are not what they should be, we are bound to

honour them, and the reason is very simple, good or bad, kind or unnatural, a father remains always a father; and therefore, because he is a father, and not because he is a *good* father, he has a right to the reverence of his children.

I know that, in practice, it is very difficult to recognise in a father or a mother who are unworthy of this holy name, the representatives of the authority of God; but in this case faith must come to the help of nature, and it is for the sake of obedience to God that we must render to this father or this mother the honour and obedience that God Himself commands. How rare a thing this is in our time! As the result of a system of education, which is wanting both in depth and in Christianity, the relation of children to their parents is almost everywhere one of deplorable freedom. They speak to them with most unbecoming familiarity; they calmly set aside their commands; they resist their authority, and often clamour for their own will and opinions, until the home becomes a scene of turmoil and strife; and finally, they do not hesitate to discuss them with their friends, and to criticise their actions in a most unwarrantable manner.

It is an imperative duty to honour our parents; but by the fourth commandment, we are equally bound to obey them. For the authority of our father and our mother is a true and real authority of Divine right, ordained by God Himself, who is the author and originator of family life. In all that is not clearly sin, a son is therefore bound to obey his parents; in everything that regards home education and choice of a position in life. This obedience must be more or less absolute according to the age of the child; as he grows older, it gradually becomes a kind of respectful deference, which should always accompany the relations of a son with his father in whatever position, and under all circumstances. It need not be said that, if our parents should forget their duty and should command us to commit a sin, they would no longer have any claim on our obedience, because their voice would no longer be for us the outward expression of the Divine Will. *Honour* and *obedience* do therefore constitute the first duty of a son towards his father and mother.

Is this all? No, we must also *love* our parents, we must show them constantly a filial tenderness, an unselfish affec-

tion, and must prove to them in all their trials that we share their griefs, and that our hearts are touched by all that affects them. If the near relationship of a father and a mother constitute a visible providence for their children, the children should, in their turn, be the consolation of their parents, and render them care for care and love for love.

Is there anything holier or happier than to see a young man full of reverence and affection for his father, attentive to his mother's slightest wish, preferring their society to the companionship of young men of his own age, and caring more for the happiness of his own home life than for the pleasures and dissipations of the world? Such characteristics as these are the signs of true nobility of nature, and are deserving of the highest possible praise.

Is it necessary to add, that children are bound to assist their parents in their necessities, and to do anything in their power rather than allow them to endure privation? For many years they have received from them food and clothing, the necessaries and often the superfluities of life; often hard work alone has been able to furnish the patient father and the devoted mother with resources sufficient to bring up their family; is it not most just that the children in their turn should provide for the wants of their parents, and should thus render to them all that they have themselves received? Woe to the worthless and ungrateful children who forget and neglect their parents in their old age, and who thus close their hearts to the truest instincts of nature as well as to the teachings of religion!

Let us render, therefore, a sacred reverence, a religious and perfect obedience, an unselfish and unbounded love to those to whom we are united by this holy tie. Such is the law of God. Let us never forget to pray for them each day, so that, by the mercy of God, we may all be happily reunited in heaven. Our father and mother were the instruments by which God created us, and brought us into this world; and He created us only that He might thus bestow upon us an eternal happiness hereafter. It is there, even in the bosom of the eternal Godhead, that our Heavenly Father desires to gather the whole family together, when the labours of life are done; it is there that He desires to unite us to those who have gone before us; and it is there that

He desires to bestow on us not only a long life, but an eternal life—the life which He promises to those who keep the fourth commandment. "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land."

TO FATHERS AND MOTHERS.

FATHERS and mothers, you are the visible divinities of your children. They see none greater than you, they see none so often as you, they love no one so much as you. They often hear of God, of the Pope, of the king, but they do not see them ; whilst they have you every day before their eyes as the living models of their actions. You are everything for them. The life which they have derived from you, they preserve only by your care, and you are their sole dependence for the future. Now a child has much of the *monkey* in its nature; it imitates, it repeats all that it sees, all that it hears. This is especially the case with regard to its father and mother. Its great ambition is to imitate them in all they do. From this fact their arises for fathers and mothers a binding obligation to lead good and holy lives themselves, that their children may thus follow them in the right way.

The heart of a child is as wax, capable of receiving any impression, good or bad ; it is as plain white linen, upon which all colours may be stamped. It is to parents that God has intrusted the care of impressing on these young pure hearts all true and virtuous feelings—those *first* impressions which are never completely effaced. If they are careful to inculcate in their children the sentiment of duty, the love and fear of God, a horror of sin, and the necessity of religion, they lay the foundation of the future happiness of these little ones whom the providence of God has confided to their care. If they do not do all this, the hearts of their children become as land which is neither tilled nor planted, as land which was ready to bring forth fruit, but which, for want of care and labour, produces nothing but briars and thorns.

And how great is the providence of God in this ! The child thus unconsciously becomes in its turn a means of *salvation* to its parents. Obliged to teach the right, not

only in words but also by example, they often find themselves drawn on to do, in the sight of their child, some good action which they would otherwise have neglected, and to avoid a thousand faults which might have an evil influence on the innocence of their child.

During a violent religious persecution in the empire of Japan, two Christians were every day expecting martyrdom, and were preparing themselves by fervent prayer. They had only one child, scarcely five years old. The tender age of their little boy, whom they would so soon be obliged to leave alone and unprotected upon earth, was the cause of their deepest anxiety. Speaking one day on this sad subject, they were saying to each other, "With the grace of God we shall have strength to suffer and even to die for our faith, but what will become of this poor little one? Ignorant of the things of God, and of the holiness of the religion of Jesus Christ, will he not renounce it at the first threat, or rather at the first command?" During their conversation the child seemed to be amusing himself without noticing anything they said. He was playing with an iron, and stirring about the coals in the fireplace. When the iron was red-hot, he drew it out, and turning towards his parents without speaking, he placed it on his hand and left it there. "What are you doing, my dear child?" cried the terrified mother. "I wanted to show you," said the little fellow gravely, "that with God's help I shall be able to bear pain as well as you, rather than give up the religion that you practise." The father and mother embraced him tenderly, shedding tears of joy, and thanking God for having given them such a child. A few days after they were seized by the persecutors, and remaining faithful unto death received, together with their child, the palm of martyrdom. Thus were they rewarded for the good teaching and the constant care which they had given to this holy child, who so happily profited by the sacred lessons he received.

The widow of a Chinese mandarin, converted by our missionaries, had one little girl, an only child, still of a very tender age. She led her one day into her oratory, and, kneeling before the crucifix, prayed silently; then turning to her child, who was kneeling at her side, she said, "God only knows how much I love you, my dear

little one; you are my only treasure upon earth, and the only pledge of his affection that your father left to me when dying; but if I believed it possible that you could ever abandon Jesus Christ, or lose your innocence, I would ask God to take you to Himself, to call you instantly out of this world. Very far from weeping for you, I would array myself as for a festival, and would esteem your death as a great blessing and favour from God."

These words recall those spoken by Queen Blanche to St. Louis, her son, during his childhood. "I would rather see you die before my eyes, than see you commit a single sin." All Christian mothers should constantly repeat them to their children.

There are fathers and mothers who lose, and there are those who save, their children. Their loss or ruin will be their *own* loss, whilst their salvation will surely prove their own also.

Like father, like son; and still more, *like mother, like child.* If you love your children, fathers and mothers, if not for yourselves at least for love of them, be good Christians, scrupulously observe the laws of God and of His Church; avoid sin, repress your passions, consider your words, be constant in prayer, swear not, do not argue and dispute, guard against anger; reverence all that relates to God, His ministers, and His temple; so live, that your child may need nothing but your daily example to guide him now in the path of right, and that hereafter the memory of his childhood may be still a pure and holy influence to draw him nearer heaven.

EARLY EDUCATION.

THE bears' cub, when first brought into the world, is merely a shapeless mass; neither head nor eyes can be distinguished. The father and mother, impelled by the instinct God has given them, instantly begin to lick their young one vigorously, and thus in a manner they fashion this imperfect body, and through their care and patience, little by little, the head, the eyes, and the claws of the cub appear, and it begins to assume its natural shape.

If parents will pardon this comparison, we would propose

this example to them. When God gives them a child, He gives them at the same time a mission to fashion, to form it for good, and to make it in all things a Christian child. With bears, it is the tongue that performs this work of formation; with men, it is also the tongue which should be the instrument in this great work, not by licking, certainly, but by speaking. What *may* not be done by the words, the influence of a father and a mother! The nature of the child is utterly in their hands and is ready to receive any impression: if these are good and holy, the heart of the little child will be formed according to the will of God; it will be pure and loving, and good and true; if, on the contrary, the pliable character of the child is warped and misdirected from the very beginning, a germ of evil will be planted in the soul, and the poor child will grow up with defects which will quickly deform, and will finally prove its destruction.

Therefore, spare no trouble, fathers and mothers, in this first work, this first influence over the minds of your children; the impressions of childhood are never completely effaced. Education begins from the cradle, and on the mother's knees. Teach your child, first of all, to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him; teach him to lisp the sacred name of Jesus, and the holy name of Mary; guide the little innocent hand to make the holy sign of the cross, even before the child can understand its meaning; and in all the simple stories that you tell him, strive to teach him something of the history of our Lord, and of the lives of the saints. A little girl of four or five years old was sitting one day on her father's knee, when she clasped her arms round his neck, and kissed him repeatedly. "Do you love me so *very* much?" he asked her. "Oh, yes" answered the child; "I do love you dearly, but I love God best." Never *spoil* your children by a blind and foolish affection. There is much meaning in the words, to *spoil* a child. To spoil a work is to ruin it, to render it useless, to destroy it; and this is exactly what is done by those weak and mistaken parents who *spoil* their children, that is to say, by those who neglect to foster a constant sense of duty, who yield to all their caprices, who indulge them foolishly and systematically, who allow them to fall into habits of waywardness, ill-temper, impertinence, greediness, and *curiosity; in* one word, who caress when they are

bound to punish, and, consequently, never fail in the end to make these little people perfectly unbearable.

In our own age, in town and country, amongst rich and poor, it is an almost universal custom, for the children to be lords and masters in the house, and to see both father and mother at their knees. This is the world turned upside down; spoilt children can never be anything but indifferent men, even if they escape being something worse. What importance, therefore, may we not attach to early education! All of which advice we offer to the consideration of parents who really love their children, and truly desire to promote their happiness.

THE SECOND EDUCATION.

THE duties of a father and mother with regard to their children, increase in proportion as the child grows older. It is the part of the parents to instil into the heart of their child upright principles and Christian feelings, and thus to form or build up his future character. A good mother is, if not the first *confessor*, at least the first *confidant* of the budding conscience of her son and of her daughter; and when years shall render this ministry of affection insufficient, it is still the mother's part to initiate the child to a still more solemn *confidence*, and to prepare it with love and tenderness for the important duty of a first confession.

All truly Christian parents should most carefully guard their child's first steps in life; they should never leave him to venture alone, without help or guidance, in the midst of innumerable dangers which he must meet at every step; they should carefully choose his friends and companions, and separate him from any who would be likely to do him harm—from those who have been badly brought up, and whose words and ideas might instil the first principles of evil; also, as a general rule, from all who belong to parents of doubtful reputation. How many poor children are first initiated in vice, and lose their childlike innocence for want of this much needed watchfulness! Nine out of ten may hvae been ruined by the influence of bad companions.

At twelve or thirteen years of age, after the first communion, parents should redouble their care, in order to urge their child to persevere in that good path upon which he

has now entered. For now come the most dangerous and perhaps the most difficult years of life. This age resembles that *Cape of Storms* which is notable for so many shipwrecks; only the best-manned and best-directed vessels escape the peril. This dangerous age of early youth, so charming when it is pure and innocent, so disastrous when it is not, should engross the entire care and thought of every good father and mother. If it is necessary that the child should leave his own home and go amongst strangers, before all things it is needful to provide for the sacred interests of the soul, and to place him amidst good influences, and amongst such surroundings that the practice of religion, far from being impossible to him, shall, on the contrary, be pleasant and easy; thus, it is necessary to avoid any calling which is incompatible with an observance of the Sunday; any position, school or college, in which the young man may not easily, if he desire, fulfil his religious duties, confess, go to Holy Communion, assist at the different offices of the Church, and thus insure his Christian perseverance. Parents need never doubt but that they will be fully rewarded for all the care they may take for this purpose; their children, by remaining Christians, will continue to be their happiness and comfort; they will shun those vices by which young men often dishonour their families and change into bitter tears the hopes of their early years. How often the sorrow and trouble by which fathers and mothers are overwhelmed towards the close of their lives, is trouble which they have entirely brought upon themselves; they reap what they have sown by their neglect, their want of faith, and by the *few* good examples with which they surrounded the early youth of their son, or of their daughter! But, on the other hand, how happy and peaceful are the closing years of life to the father and mother who have spent their days in one life-long endeavour to make their children true and earnest Christians! They, too, shall reap what they have sown: fruits of peace and joy and love, of which death itself shall not be able to deprive them, and which shall follow them even unto the bosom of their God.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

THE life that God has given us is the most precious and the most fundamental of His gifts. Every other benefit that Providence bestows, implies and supposes this first benefit of all. *To live* is, therefore, the primary of the rights of man. He who first dared to violate this sacred right, and to attempt the life of another man, was the execrable Cain, the eldest of the sons of Adam. He had one only brother, younger than himself, and also holier, more gentle, more amiable, and consequently more beloved.

Pride and envy entered into the heart of Cain; the devil, who by means of original sin, had taken from man his spiritual life, desired to carry his ravages still further and to destroy the life of the body. He inspired Cain with a terrible determination to kill his brother Abel; and one day when they had gone together to offer a sacrifice to God, Cain rose up against his brother and murdered him. Thus Cain (and Satan with him) became the first homicide.

The fury of evil passions has often renewed this horrible crime, of which Cain himself said, "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon." All men who commit this sin are called HOMICIDES.

PARRICIDE is the term applied to the unnatural son who murders his father or mother; INFANTICIDE, to the father or mother who murder their child; REGICIDE, to the man who dares attempt the life of his sovereign; and finally, a SUICIDE is the man who kills himself.

There has been, however, one homicide more guilty and more terrible than any we have named: it is that which was committed upon Good Friday on Mount Calvary, by the DEICIDAL Jews, upon the adorable Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Homicide is forbidden by the fifth commandment.

God, who is the author of all life, also constitutes Himself its guardian, and forbids every man to take away, unjustly, the life of his neighbour. We say *unjustly*, because there are circumstances in which we are permitted or even commanded to deprive a man of life; for instance, when confronted by an assassin who desires to murder us, or by an *enemy* in war.

It is also the right and the duty of sovereigns, by the command of God Himself, to put all great criminals to death, not only in order to purge society, but also to punish them, and to make them serve as an example to others.

But, beyond these exceptional cases, it is, we repeat, strictly forbidden to attempt the life of any one under any pretext whatsoever.

We are even forbidden to run a great risk of killing any one; by scientific experiments, for instance; by laying senseless and dangerous wagers; by duelling, &c. To kill any one by accident and without intention, is not a crime but a misfortune.

Such homicides would, however, be guilty, if the persons who committed them might have avoided them by taking ordinary precautions. If we are forbidden to take away our neighbour's life, we are equally forbidden to take away our own. Our life does not belong to us any more than does that of our fellow-men. It belongs to God alone, and God alone can dispose of it. Suicide is a crime beyond forgiveness; it is the only one which cannot be pardoned, because it is the only one which takes away all possibility of repentance. It is, pre-eminently, the sin against the Holy Ghost, who is the author of all life.

If any unfortunate man, overwhelmed by misery, should be tempted to despair, let him revolt against the terrible thought, that the devil will perhaps inspire him to destroy himself; and let him remember that, in exchange for the transient and endurable afflictions of earth, he will condemn himself to the eternal fires of hell, and to the incomprehensible misery of damnation.

The fifth commandment forbids us to kill our fellow-men and to kill ourselves; but it goes still further. It also forbids us to do anything which could unjustly injure the life, health, wellbeing, or reputation of our neighbour. Thus, he who should take advantage of the poverty of one of his fellow men, to impose on him some work beyond his strength, would sin against this commandment. In this case the *law* itself protects the interests of poor workmen and apprentices; it fixes the hours of work which may not be exceeded, and imposes severe penalties upon all classes of employers who should venture to do so.

But often these wise regulations are not put into execution, and the sin of those who have dared to violate them

remains unpunished upon earth. Then God Himself will execute justice and will avenge the cause of the poor, the weak and the friendless whom He loves.

Again, all parents or masters who refuse their children or dependants the necessaries of life, sin against the fifth commandment. There are in the world certain avaricious and hardhearted people who only seek to grow rich, and care nothing for the health or wellbeing of those whom they employ; they will let them grow ill and die rather than consult a doctor or put themselves to any inconvenience. Is not such cruelty a veritable homicide?

And again, this sin is committed, although under another phase, by the slanderer who destroys the reputation of his neighbour, the fair fame without which life is often unendurable. A good reputation is a most valuable possession, and no man has the right unjustly to deprive another of it. Therefore, he who, without real necessity, destroys the reputation of his neighbour, is guilty of a moral assassination. "The tongue is an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison."

Slander is a great evil, but, what is more, it is an irreparable evil. The slanderer has not even the same resource as the calumniator, who can, by retracting his words and accusing himself, repair the ill that he has done; because, since slander consists in making known some wrong-doing that has truly been committed by another, it is not possible to retract, since a retraction would be a lie. Slander is, therefore, as irremediable as assassination. At the same time, it is not a grievous sin except when it bears upon matters of serious consequence.

Lastly, the fifth commandment forbids all hatred, anger, conflicts, blows, and wounds; it forbids the spirit of vengeance, and everything which might injure the body or life of our fellow-men. Much more might be said upon this subject, and many circumstances might be related in support of what we have said. But I hope that these few words will suffice to increase in your hearts a right regard for your neighbour, to throw a stronger light upon your principal duties with respect to his life, his wellbeing, and his reputation, and to induce you to practise more faithfully for the future all that is implied and divinely enforced by the fifth commandment of God.

SUICIDE.

Two soldiers, both sergeants in a line regiment, having leave one afternoon, went together to visit a compatriot who happened to be ill in the military hospital. In the bed next to that of their friend was another sick man; a man so terribly disfigured that it was painful to look at him; his nose and lips and chin were all seamed and shapeless with still recent scars. "Who could have been brutal enough to disfigure that poor fellow so horribly?" whispered one of the soldiers to his friend. "Scars like that will not help him in winning a wife!" "He did it himself," was the answer in the same low tone; "he attempted to kill himself, but he missed his aim and disfigured his face as you see! Now he thanks God for having left him on earth in spite of himself, and he swears to me that the devil will be troubled to get hold of him again. He was in great trouble!—who *is* not in trouble at times?—and he lost all control over himself, and fancied he could not endure to live longer; now he is thankful to live, even in all the suffering that those frightful wounds cause him!"

The conversation lasted some little time longer, and then the two sergeants left their friend; but they could not refrain from casting a compassionate glance in the direction of his suffering neighbour, and left the hospital much impressed by this sad spectacle. "What a fool a man must be to kill himself!" said one when they were once more alone. "He wants to escape from some grief or trouble that he fancies he cannot endure, as if any trouble were eternal, as if fine weather did not always come after rain, and days of happiness after days of sadness. How often you see a man on the brink of despair one day, and quite comforted and hopeful on the next. A man kills himself, say, for love of some heartless woman who only laughs at his despair, and whose vanity will be increased by the thought that a man actually killed himself because of her. If he had only had the patience to live a week or two longer, both love and misery would have flown away together. Or a fellow kills himself on account of some debt he cannot pay, or some disgrace he thinks he cannot avoid, and perhaps even at that very moment some friend, some unlooked-

for providential help may be waiting at the door, ready to provide the money needed, or to avert the humiliation." "You are right," interrupted his friend, "and we have just had a very striking example of what you say. A sergeant-major in our regiment, who had indulged in extravagant amusements, took fifty francs from a desk. Upon the point of being discovered, he wrote to his parents, who failed to reply as quickly as he expected; he then applied by letter to an officer whom he knew intimately; one day passed, and he heard nothing from him. Then the man lost all control over himself, and became like one distraught; he saw himself condemned, dishonoured, lost, and resolving to escape dishonour by suicide (just as if it were the *punishment* that made the dishonour and not the sin itself), he shut himself in his room and blew out his brains! An hour had scarcely passed, and his body was not yet cold, when the officer to whom he had written entered his room, bringing him the sum he had asked for; he had not been able to come before, and thus only because he did not know how to wait a few hours, the unfortunate sergeant had lost at one blow the life of his body. . . and something which is of higher value still."

These two sergeants were good and earnest Christians,—and here we may say that the ranks of the army, with their ever-increasing number of good Catholic soldiers, fill one full of hope for the future,—they were faithful in prayer, and scrupulously avoided all bad companionship, drinking, and sinful excesses. Courageously indifferent to the raillery of comrades of another order, they preserved in the regiment the Christian habits of their youth. We need not seek far for the secret of their perseverance, since they never passed a month without approaching the sacraments. "What folly," continued the soldier with animation, "and what selfishness too, to sacrifice all duty, all affection, to a mere desire to escape from suffering! This miserable man thought only of himself, and yet, perhaps, he had a mother who depended entirely upon him, who will never cease to weep for him, and who will die bereft of the love and care he owed her. 'Let my mother weep,' he seems to say; 'let her grow old in grief and solitude, I cannot help it, my life is hateful to me, and I will bear it no longer!' Or perhaps he had a sister, a wife who loved him, friends to whom *his* death would bring sorrow and trouble. . . 'So much the

worse for them if they suffer; but I—I will suffer no more!' And our country—what would become of it if all her sons acted thus? My country, let her do as she can; once dead, what is all the world to me? This is just what is said by the man who destroys his own life, not in word but in deed, and is it not a most ignoble egotism?

"And then it is such cowardice. A man kills himself because he has not the courage to live. For a brave man, and above all for a Christian, there is *no* suffering which cannot be borne. In nine cases out of ten, the troubles that come upon us are the natural consequences of our own faults, our own passions, our own sins. When a man has sufficient courage to commit a crime, he should surely not be wanting in courage to expiate it. It is vain to assert that there are circumstances in which he is, as it were, *bound* to pass sentence upon himself and to deprive himself of an existence of which he is utterly unworthy; *every* man is of use in this world who does his duty, and sets an example of resignation and courage and repentance; and to pass sentence upon himself is only to commit a further outrage upon true justice, upon the justice of men, and upon the justice of God! In whatever may be said to the contrary, the only real expiation consists in submission to a merited punishment, and in sincere repentance.

"Experience proves that, however shameful the crime, the grace of repentance can always efface it, and once more raise the guilty man not only in the sight of God, but even in the eyes of men. Is not the penitent thief a saint in heaven now?

"If an assassin die upon the scaffold, and if in dying he *accept* his suffering, if he humiliate himself beneath the hand which strikes him, if he welcome death as a righteous expiation, then, at that very instant, hatred and contempt become changed into pity and sympathy—I might almost say into *respect*—and the assassin will die beneath the hand of the executioner absolved and pardoned even in the opinion of men. Who, when witnessing a bitter repentance, can dwell upon the sins of the past?"

"You speak like a book," replied his friend, "and what is more, like a *good* book. For my part, a man who commits suicide always reminds me of a deserter. It is not sufficient to desert and to escape the weariness of service, you have afterwards to escape the council of war. And if you

sometimes succeed in eluding that, there is yet another council of war which no man can avoid. What must that moment be in which he appears at the tribunal of the great God whom he has boldly defied in death as in life, and who requires a terrible account both of life and of death! That man must have a strangely-constituted mind who can choose an eternity of misery in preference to those earthly trials which, however bitter, are never without some alleviation, if it consist only in the certainty that they will soon be ended." "Yes," said his comrade, laughing, "it is just like the man who walked into the river, that he might not be wet by the rain! How much better to suffer here than hereafter: we are happy in having faith."

Thus talking, the two soldiers reached their barracks, where we will take leave of them.

Take a lesson from the self-same school. I hope that you will have a life of unclouded happiness, but the future is known to God alone, and I can predict without the gift of prophecy, that He will send you trials here below. However grievous these may be, do not grow discouraged; never abandon yourself to despair; remind yourself constantly that the sufferings of this world are only for a time, that heaven, with all its joys, awaits him who shall have borne them with Christian fortitude; and if ever the frightful temptation to self-destruction should present itself to your heart, turn away from it with fear and shuddering. Suicide is the one crime which is beyond forgiveness, because it is the only crime which is beyond repentance!

THE DUEL.

In 1849, in one of the regiments of the garrison at Lyons, was a young soldier named Julien Q., whose time of service had just expired. Julien was the only son of a poor widow, who loved him dearly, and to whom he was tenderly attached. She wrote to him often, and her letters clearly showed that as the time of his return drew near, her impatience to see him gradually increased. Just as when in travelling a long distance the last stages appear longer than all the rest of the journey.

Julien, on his part, looked forward with happiness to

the day of his departure, not that his soldier's life was distasteful to him,—on the contrary, he liked it, and was well fitted for it in every respect, but it was now seven years since he had left his home and had last embraced his aged mother. The long-expected, much-desired moment arrived at last. Julien received his dismissal, said good-bye to his comrades and to his officers, with whom he had been a great favourite, and as he left his old quarters for the last time, he could not resist a sigh as he looked back regretfully over that glorious military career which was already one of the things of the past.

There is no unmingled happiness on earth, and ever in our greatest joys we find a place for tears.

Some of Julien's comrades, to whom he had been particularly attached, had asked for leave of absence that they might accompany him some distance from the town. Amongst the number of his friends was one of his cousins named Jean, a good young fellow, and as free as Julien himself from the vices common to the regiment, and one whose companionships had often helped him to remain constant in the faithful practice of his duties. In proportion as the little party left the barracks still further and further behind them, the ex-soldier, insensibly forgetting all that he was leaving, thinking only of what lay before him, walked with a light and happy step, talking of his mother, of his sisters, of the village, and his country home; he had never appeared so merry and animated. "I feel as if I must be dreaming," he said to his cousin. "I can scarcely believe that I am a soldier no longer, that this evening I shall not be obliged to answer to the call, and that in a few days I shall be in the arms of my mother. It seems as if I scarcely know myself, or whether I am asleep or awake. How many times in Africa I have despaired of living to see this day! When engaged in our dangerous expedition, and in sharp skirmishing with the Kabiles, with bullets flying round, I have said to myself, after making an act of contrition, 'Now, my friend, your turn is come, the word is gone forth, and you will never return to your own country. You must send a farewell to your good mother far away, you will never embrace her again, and it is vain that she awaits you in the little cottage in your village home.' Ah, that is just what I said to myself, and then I loaded my gun, and fired upon an enemy who received every

shot. Well, my presentiments proved false; I escaped without a scratch. I have said a long farewell to Africa, and my mother has only a few days longer to wait for me!"

Alas! poor woman, she is waiting for him still, or rather she waits for him no more; and it is he who waits for her . . . but not in his village home.

The day declined; the soldiers had already come a long distance, and it was time to think of parting. They had nearly reached a little village which they now perceived at a short distance from the high road. Between themselves and the village stood a house which by its gaudily painted sign proclaimed itself an inn. In front of this house, close to the road-side, from which it was only separated by a hedge, was an arbour, and within the arbour a table and some benches.

"Before separating, we must have a bottle of wine, and drink to your health, Julien, and to our next merry meeting," exclaimed one of his companions; "what do you say to that, old fellow?"

"A capital idea," answered Julien merrily; "here is an inn, and a garden, and tables which look exactly as if they had been expecting us. Let us go in and have one more glass together before saying good-bye. Besides, my purse is too heavy to carry, and I should find that very inconvenient on my journey. Here we are; forward, comrades, and I will stand treat!"

They entered the inn, and an instant after they were seated in the arbour round a rustic table, where they were quickly supplied with glasses and bottles.

They began drinking at first almost in silence. The moment of separation is always sad; but after they had emptied some few bottles the wine began to work its usual effects; the conversation grew animated, and then so noisy that it was soon a perfect uproar; nothing was to be heard but laughter and jokes, and glasses were filled and emptied with the utmost rapidity; wild excitement, inflamed eyes, and heated faces were the result, whilst more than one touched the borders of intoxication. Julien, although usually sober, drank like the rest. However, they were at last obliged to think of setting off, he in one direction, and his friends in the other; for it was growing late, and the sun was fast sinking beneath the horizon. "Let us be off, my friends," said Julien, rising from the table; "now is the

moment of separation! it is getting dark, and I have still some distance to go to finish my first stage. Let us bid each other an affectionate farewell, and start at once."

"Eh! what," exclaimed one of his companions who was seated next to him, and whose voice and physiognomy clearly showed that he scarcely knew what he said, "is it thus that friends shall part? You have more time than you want and we too, and I am not going to let you go until we have drunk each other's healths once more," and pulling him roughly by the arm, he forced him to sit down once more by his side.

"I tell you it is time, and more than time to be off," answered Julien impatiently; "I have no wish to pass the night out of doors, and, besides, we have already drunk too much."

"Oh! we have drunk too much! and pray what do you mean by that? do you take us for drunkards? or do you say it because you are afraid we shall make you spend too much money! *Morbleu!* Keep you money to yourself if it is *that* which is troubling you; do you suppose we have none of us a penny in our pockets! Waiter! bring six more bottles of wine, but do not put them down to *this* gentleman's account; *I* will pay for them!" As he spoke, he dragged Julien, who had once more risen to go, violently by the arm, and made him sit down a second time, or rather fall upon the bench at his side. He fell so roughly that the bench nearly turned over. His companions went into bursts of laughter—laughter which was very shortly to be changed to sorrow, for a great misfortune was coming upon them.

Julien rose, pale with anger. "If it had been any one but *you*," he cried in a voice quivering with passion, "I would not have let this pass!"

"What do you mean by that?" answered the other furiously; "menaces now! but look to yourself, for no one has ever threatened *me* with impunity;" and thrusting his hand into Julien's face, he pulled his moustache insolently. Julien seized a bottle, and was about to throw it at his head, but the other stopped his arm, and drawing his sword, exclaimed, "If you are not a coward, it is not with bottles, but with swords that we will fight!"

Julien, perfectly beside himself with anger and intoxication, seized the sword of one of his companions which

was placed on the table near him. In vain they endeavoured to stop them, in an instant they had sprung over a low fence which separated them from a neighbouring wood, and had already put themselves on their guard without even giving themselves time to take off their coats.

"Julien," cried his cousin in an entreating voice, "have you then forgotten your mother?"

At these words he stopped, appeared to hesitate for an instant, and made a movement as though to throw his sword away.

"Are you *afraid?*" questioned his adversary in a tone of contempt. Immediately Julien put himself once more upon his guard, and the duel commenced, desperate and furious. Who would have thought, watching those sword thrusts, that these young men were two good friends, who, only a quarter of an hour before, had shaken each other by the hand and taken wine together.

The struggle did not last long. In another minute Julien dropped his sword, he grew terribly pale, put his hand to his heart, and tottered. His adversary's steel had pierced his breast, and he was mortally wounded.

His cousin, and his other companions who had not been able to approach before, ran immediately to his help. He fell into their arms, having no longer power to stand. The men and women from the inn also gathered round him, having hastened up at the noise of arms. The confusion was indescribable. The young soldier's blood was flowing fast; his face was of a death-like pallor; his eyes were half closed; he seemed about to die in the arms of his friends. As to his adversary, no words could describe his despair. He stood silent, motionless, a cold moisture on his brow, gazing with a dull, fixed expression on the unfortunate comrade whom he had mortally wounded.

They carried the unhappy Julien into one of the rooms in the inn and placed him upon a bed. He only spoke to repeat, constantly, "My mother! . . . A priest! . . . My mother. . . ." They sent in haste for the *curé* of the village, and during the time they undressed the dying man. As they removed his coat, several things which he had placed between his coat and his shirt fell on the ground: these were his mother's last letters, a silk handkerchief, and other little presents which he had intended for his sisters.

The letters, the handkerchief, everything was stained with blood; it was a most heartrending sight.

The village *curé* soon arrived: happily there was yet time; Julien could scarcely speak, but he was quite conscious, and could answer the questions of the priest by moving his head, and by monosyllables. He received absolution and extreme unction with deep and evident emotion; then, feeling his end was near, he signed to his cousin to come near to him, and said with a last effort, "Write . . . to my mother; tell her that I die . . . a Christian . . . and that I ask her to forgive me . . . as I forgive the comrade who has killed me. . . . All pray for me. . . . Farewell!" An instant after, Julien breathed his last. They buried him the next day, and the whole village followed the funeral.

As to his companions, they returned to the garrison feeling thoroughly sad and dispirited. The despair of the unfortunate man who had killed Julien was something terrible. "I am a miserable man—an assassin," he said from time to time in a hollow voice; and these were the only words he spoke. From this time he lived a life apart from the rest, never drinking, never laughing, and passing his time in praying in the churches. He put all his money by in order to have masses said for the soul of him whose death he had caused. . .

In this, as in so many other similar cases, we may see the consequences of the most detestable practice of duelling. How can any man be so utterly wanting in *moral* courage as not to resist and condemn it upon every opportunity?

SCANDAL.

To cheat and to steal are, certainly, not *virtuous* actions: if we do either, we sin against God, our neighbour, and ourselves; but to give scandal to others is still worse, for this is one of the greatest dangers which can menace the soul. Scandal is the evil which we do to others by the bad example that we give them.

A man does wrong, no one knows it; he is guilty in the sight of God; he will lose his own soul if he do not repent. This is very certain and very lamentable, but at least his

example has perverted no one. But suddenly a man hides his wrong-doing no longer, his evil life becomes known and spoken of, he even speaks of it himself, boasts of it, and appears to glory in a miserable notoriety. Others, attracted at first by curiosity, begin to make a little circle round him, and to regard him with admiration. "At all events this man must get some pleasure and excitement out of life!" they begin to say; and thus it follows that the evil which they regarded too closely strikes them, they are gradually overpowered by it; and next we may see them enjoying themselves after the manner of their model; they imitate him, and soon they desire to go still further than he! This is scandal!

One man offended God; at this hour there are ten, a hundred, a thousand. . . . Death strikes the author of this scandal; he goes to stand before his Heavenly Judge and render an account of all those thousand souls lost by his example!

Thus you see how incalculable are the effects of bad example. How is it possible completely to retrieve a scandal? We may desire to do it, but often it is quite beyond our power. Our Lord said, "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh. It were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." He who knows everything, knew well that those who give scandal to their brethren stand upon the brink of their own eternal ruin! But, on the other hand, how happy a thing it is to give a good example! It is to work in union with God Himself for the salvation of souls. And how great is this power which each one of us possesses! Consider the case of a young man who has been so unhappy as to give scandal to others by setting them an evil example; if he only examine himself, if he reflect, and consider the terrible account he will have to render, he becomes changed and converted; he was openly wicked, and is now openly a Christian! His companions ridicule him, he pities them, he advises them to imitate him in his conversion; he sets an example of patience and temperance, of industry and morality, and, in the end, succeeds in saving a great number of those whom he would most certainly have led to destruction.

It is impossible to calculate the immense influence of

example. By means of this all-powerful influence whole families, parishes, schools, and communities are either saved or lost. I have known a numerous family, worse than indifferent, become a model of religion and fervour, thanks to the holy influence of but one of its members who, by turning to God with his whole heart, caused the light of faith to shine upon all who surrounded him through the force of example alone. And I have known another family in which the apostasy of the eldest son led away into heresy a number of his brothers and sisters. . . . How many parishes have been perverted, corrupted to their very centres, by the scandal given by one bad priest! In a college, in a school, one thoroughly bad child will entice into evil the greater part of his schoolfellows, and if the superiors do not arrest the contagion from its very commencement, by driving this black sheep out of their midst, the whole flock will surely be lost. And finally, in a state, how incalculable are the evils, which, by a fatal necessity, are always produced by the immorality of a sovereign or by his irreligion! Now, what is the conclusion to be drawn from all this? That scandal is an immense evil. He who has given scandal has but one chance of salvation, and that is by becoming entirely changed and setting a good example to those whom he formerly scandalised.

Human respect will often prove a stumbling-block; but we must gather courage: those who have dared to do evil must also dare to be repentant in the sight of all.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

By the sixth commandment God forbids us to defile by sin the body He has given us. Our body, the living temple of our soul, is consequently the temple of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and this temple must be holy. *Impurity* is the terrible vice by which Satan, the enemy of Jesus Christ, and our own untiring foe, desires to soil this sanctuary of God.

Our body does not belong to us; God has not *given*, but has *lent* it to us, in order that we may do with it not what *we* will, but what *He* wills. He alone remains its Lord and Master; our soul possesses the body not as a right, but

as a trust of which it must render an account. We are not free to do with our body just what we desire, but are bound, in strict justice, whether we will or not, to keep it in submission to the authority of its true master.

Purity or *chastity* is the virtue which accomplishes in the flesh the designs and will of God. By means of it the senses are subservient to the soul, which is itself subservient to Jesus Christ; and thus perfect order reigns.

Satan detests purity, and endeavours by constant attacks, which we call *temptations*, to disturb and trouble this tranquillity; and, by causing the flesh to rebel against the spirit, he tries to shake the soul itself, and to separate it from Jesus Christ by sin. When the tempter approaches us in this manner, let us have recourse to God by prayer, and never voluntarily consent to temptation.

There can be no sin without the *will* to sin, and we should despise such ignoble temptations. Besides prayer, the surest means to preserve purity, and to conquer all attacks against it, consists in constant employment, in frequent communion, and in devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

We do not desire, nor are we able to enter here into details. Let it suffice to say that the sixth commandment forbids all words, looks, and actions, in a word everything that is contrary to purity. It commands us to be modest and chaste, to avoid everything which can excite the senses or *open the door to the devil.* We must, therefore, if we desire to remain faithful to God, most carefully shun all occasions of sin, such as evil company, pernicious books, and dangerous pleasures; and as these vary infinitely, according to the age, position, and character of each individual, there is no other rule to give than that all should follow the practice of good Christians, and be guided by the advice of their confessor.

Impurity is a scourge for the health of the body as well as for the sanctity of the soul. It causes death, and thus religion, by helping us to avoid its fatal blows, is our temporal benefactress, as well as the mother of our souls and the guardian of our salvation. How many have seen their youth, their beauty, their health, their life, wither in ignominy by reason of impurity alone; and in how many souls it has tarnished the source of true joy and pure affections, of peace and of real happiness! It is utterly *detestable*; it is the enemy of men as well as the enemy of

God; the enemy of the body as well as the enemy of the soul; it should be hated on earth as it is hated in heaven. And yet, behold the corruption of the world! This terrible vice is everywhere regarded with the greatest leniency; it covers itself with flowers; it hides its infection under the mask of pleasure and happiness; it usurps the holy and divine name of love, and thus drags down to the lowest depths the noblest and most sublime sentiments of the soul.

God has Himself reserved for all such sinners the fearful punishment of the eternal fires of hell, that fire of which He Himself has said that it shall never be extinguished. "Ignis eorum non extinguetur." When we are tempted to sin against holy purity let us think of hell. We should say to the body, "Thou dost pretend that it is impossible to conquer thy passions, that this temptation is irresistible! How wilt thou then be able to endure consuming fires, and to dwell eternally in flames with Satan?"

We may find in Holy Scripture a terrible example of the hatred felt by God to this sin of impurity, viz., in the punishment of the town of Sodom. Given up, beyond all other cities, to a frightful excess of depravity, this infamous town was consumed with all its inhabitants by a miraculous and sulphurous fire which enveloped it by the command of God. Reduced to ashes, and still visible in the depths of the Dead Sea, it remains for ever as a witness of Divine vengeance, as a warning to sinners, as an earthly manifestation of the punishment of impurity by eternal fire, and lastly as the most impressive confirmation of the sixth commandment of God: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

DRUNKENNESS.

THERE is a certain fearful malady which ravages and devastates the whole world. There is no country free from its inroads; it is to be met with in France as in England, in Europe as in America, amongst people who call themselves civilised just as amongst barbarians. For many centuries it has decimated humanity, and has been the ruin of the working classes.

You will think, perhaps, that I am speaking of the plague, or of cholera, or of some pestilence of this description.

But no, the sickness to which I refer is much more to be dreaded! . . . It is a far more *mortal* sickness; and it is doubly terrible, because it does not only kill the body but even destroys the soul, and its lamentable influence extends beyond the grave!

It is called DRUNKENNESS. This it is which degrades and brutalises the miserable man who once yields to its fatal tyranny! It is this which is the ruin of families, and which is thus most frequently the cause of that frightful poverty which is to be witnessed in large towns.

Drunkenness is the *habit* of drinking immoderately. Intoxication when quite involuntary is not a sin. It is a sin, more or less grievous, as it is more or less wilful; and also according to the extent of the excess. It is always a grievous fault voluntarily to lose the use of reason.

"Be not deceived," say the Holy Scriptures, "drunkards shall not enter into the kingdom of God."

I. *Drunkenness debases and degrades a man.* What distinguishes men from brutes? Is not reason his noblest prerogative? Now, what does the drunkard do? How does he use his intelligence? Does he not reduce himself to a state of stupidity in which he knows no longer what he says nor what he does? His feet tremble beneath him, his eyes grow dim, his tongue stammers foolishly; instead of walking he stumbles on his way, and defiles himself with the mire and clay in which his feet are slipping! Is not the dog which passes by him a nobler animal than he? Poor fallen humanity!

The magistrates of Sparta used to expose in public a drunken slave in order to inspire their youth with a horror for this vice. "What monster is this?" cried the crowd; "he has the face of a man, but he has the nature of a beast!"

II. *Drunkenness enfeebles the health and shortens the life.* Intoxication exhausts and weakens the frame, however great the physical strength may naturally be. Experience proves it. The ordinary effect of wine, of brandy, and of all intoxicating drinks, is to carry the blood violently to the head; and thus, punished by the very instrument of his sin, apoplexy and sudden death are the usual chastisements which await the drunkard. An unfortunate soldier, having one day drunk to an excess, fell into such a state of intoxication that it brought on fever, and then inflammation of *the brain,* which left him for ever bereft of reason. Great

God! what a state was this in which to appear before Thy Divine tribunal!

III. *Drunkenness inflames the passions, and brings misery into every home.* Woe to the woman who has a drunkard for her husband! and still more, woe to the husband and the children of the woman who drinks! Without speaking of the want of morality which almost always accompanies this terrible habit, is there anything more debased than a man overcome with wine? When he returns home, after having squandered all the earnings of the week so sadly needed by his family, he finds himself face to face with a hopeless or exasperated woman. If she meet him with just reproaches, then, heated by drink, and half distraught, he becomes furious, gives vent to imprecations, sets a terrible example to his unfortunate children, and illtreats both them and their unhappy mother! What an infamous spectacle! Tears on one side; oaths and violence on the other; are not such homes as these reflections and images of hell?

St. Augustine relates that a young man in the town, named Cyril, who, in the society of worthless companions, passed his days in a state of intoxication, having one day yielded to an excess of intemperance, returned home, and stabbed one of his sisters who reproached him with his condition. At the crisis of the victim the father hastened to the spot, and Cyril then dared to lift his hand against him who gave him life, and killed him as he had killed his sister. St. Augustine, being immediately informed of this execrable crime, assembled his people in the church, and although he had already preached twice that day, ascended the pulpit, and made known to his hearers the terrible sin into which drunkenness had led one of their fellow-citizens. His sobs and his emotion spoke more loudly than his words. The greatest distress was visible throughout the whole assembly, and all joined in fervent prayer to avert those strokes of Divine justice which might be expected to fall upon the city in which so monstrous a crime had been perpetrated. Poor wives, who have the misfortune of being united to husbands who are drunkards, never reproach them when you see them in this state. How can you benefit a man who is capable of neither feeling nor reflection? Turn to God, who, in all our troubles, is ever ready to comfort and console us. Pray constantly and untiringly for the conversion of your husband. In prayer

alone you win a means to lighten your burden, and to avoid offending God.

Children, who have witnessed the sinful excesses of your father, guard yourselves from following his example, and, taught by a frightful experience, promise God to walk in a totally opposite way.

But for yourselves, drunkards, my poor friends, should the providence of God ever permit these simple pages to come within your sight, I say to you, Take courage; and should it even be necessary for you to renounce entirely that which is the means of leading you to perdition, do not hesitate, be converted, live a changed life, become honest men and earnest Christians. Awake to the moans and lamentations of the wife you render miserable. Awake to the tears and cries of the little children you are dragging down to utter beggary. Awake to the thunderings of the anger of God. Behold! hell is open before you; and you will most surely fall into it if you still persist in sin.

Then, have confidence in God, who is ever ready to pardon all things to him who repents. Lose no time, but have recourse at once to Divine mercy, and profit by the time that is left to you, and which is perhaps shorter than you think, to obtain, by true repentance, the pardon of past sins.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

WITH the exception of the professional sharper, every one agrees in acknowledging the culpability and infamy of THEFT. Upon this point people quite without religion think just the same as Christians.

The seventh commandment of God condemns theft, and it is this commandment which I desire to explain with several details. These details, rest assured, are not superfluous; a number of people will grant a general principle without understanding all the consequences which result from it, and even those who grant most willingly that it is forbidden to steal are sometimes surprisingly clever in binding themselves as to the nature of certain forbidden profits which, in clear language, ought to be called THEFTS.

To steal is to take something which does not belong to

us without having any right to it; it is to sin against our neighbour by appropriating what is lawfully his. It is not here necessary to demonstrate that it is wrong to steal. "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you," says the law of God. Should you be willing for any one to take your clothes, your money, your house, your field, or anything that belongs to you? Should you not justly condemn the man who committed such an action towards you? Therefore, theft is both guilty and unjust. There are many methods of stealing. The best known, and the most daring, is theft upon the high-road; the theft committed by the armed bandit who stops the unwary traveller and demands his money or his life. Next in the category comes a class of thieves who are quite as dishonest, but whose evil doings are involved in much more mystery. These are swindlers, sharpers, pickpockets, housebreakers, in a word, the ordinary *habitues* of the house of correction. For such as these there is no cry for mercy, since they are universally rejected and contemned. And next comes a third class not so easily recognised. These are people who, under a pretence of rendering you a service, get possession of your money by schemes and calculations so cleverly concocted that they appear quite above reproach. They are charitable enough to lend you a sum of money at the modest interest of 20, 25, or 50 per cent.; or they will lend you money with a show of fair dealing at only 8 or 10 per cent., but in a very short time, by accumulating both interest and principal, they will soon contrive to ruin you.

Usurers are the curse of workmen, small farmers, clerks, and young married men. The law discourages the practice of usury as much as posssible, but it can render itself invisible, and often hides itself so well that it is impossible to prove it in order to punish it. But although the usurer may succeed in eluding human justice, he shall fall hereafter into the hands of God, who cannot be deceived.

The fourth method of stealing, with regard to which it is very easy to deceive one's self, is, for this reason, only too common, especially in large towns. A shopman sells for the first quality something that he knows to be of inferior quality; he weighs, he measures, always to his own advantage; he knows how to turn the scale so cleverly that the unfortunate purchaser can perceive nothing wrong. Thus

out of twelve or fifteen yards he will manage to gain about half a yard; out of fifteen or twenty pounds of merchandise, a pound or a pound and a half. *This is a theft, nothing but a theft!*

A cook goes to market, she bargains, and buys for about three shillings the chicken or the fish for which anywhere else she must have paid at least five shillings; then she unhesitatingly enters five shillings in her book of expenditure, excusing herself by this kind of reasoning, which is unfortunately prevalent amongst servants, "I might have gone to the fruiterer's, and then I should have spent five shillings; if I have taken the trouble to go to market to wear out my boots, and to beat down the prices, it is quite fair that I should profit by it, and not my master and mistress." *That is a theft, nothing but a theft;* the interests of your master and mistress ought to be to you the same as your own, and as for the two shillings *you have stolen them!*

A servant asks and obtains from some purveyor five per cent. upon each account; nothing could appear more legitimate. "By going to this man rather than another," the servant argues, "I enable him to gain a large sum of money every year; he recognises, by a trifling commission, the little service that I render him; I may therefore quite conscientiously, profit by this arrangement." Yes, but on the condition, rarely observed, that this commission should be upon the profit of the shopman, and not at the expense of the master, unless with his consent. And in some cases the profit is so small that it is impossible to allow the five per cent. Then what is the result? The shopman gives false weights, increases his prices, and the servant, blinded by interest, pretends not to perceive it. Nevertheless he wrongs the master who pays and employs him by allowing him to be charged unfairly. Is he, then, an honest servant?

We might add many other examples; amongst others we might speak of children who abstract small sums from their mother's drawer under the specious pretext that what belongs to the parents belongs to the children, of many who exact money unfairly for small services in which they have been employed; but it is impossible to say everything, and the individual conscience will supply what is wanting.

Theft is a mortal sin when it is of some importance, and this importance must be determined by the circumstances, and by the value and importance of the object stolen. Thus,

to steal a few pence, or an old coat, from a poor man might be a mortal sin. At the same time, it is quite certain that, however great the fortune of the person robbed, to steal a sum of four or five shillings would be committing a mortal sin.

If we are forbidden to steal from others, we are equally forbidden to retain stolen property.

If you perceive that you have in your possession something which belongs to me, it is quite clear that you ought to restore it to me, and that as soon as possible. This is simple justice.

To make restitution is to restore to others that which rightfully belongs to them.

We are obliged to make restitution under pain of mortal sin, in the case of an object of some value. No one is obliged, in making restitution, to inform against themselves, it is even better to avoid it. The money may be sent anonymously, or placed in the hands of the priest or some person of confidence, so that it may reach its destination safely and secretly. If it is impossible to restore to its owners what has been wrongfully taken from them, it should be given to the poor, or employed in some work of piety. But in everything of this kind there is always one practical rule to give: consult your confessor, and do exactly what he tells you.

I need not add that a man who does not pay his debts when he is able to pay them, wrongs his neighbour and breaks the seventh commandment.

In this, as in everything which concerns honour, it is well to be excessively careful. This is the only case in which it may be good to be *scrupulous*. How much less misery, how much less crime, there would be in the world, if all men heard and faithfully kept the seventh commandment.

THEFT.

THEFT! what a sinister word! It causes the cheek to flush with shame, and the heart to swell with a sense of indescribable scorn and indignation!

To steal is to take voluntarily something that belongs to another.

To take the property of another by mistake, thinking it is our own, is not to steal but only to deceive one's self. The most honest people might make such a mistake as this. But in such a case as this there is this difference between an honest man and a thief: a thief would keep his usurped property, whilst an honest man would restore it directly he discovered his error.

It is related of St. Eloi, minister of Dagobert king of France, that, desiring to build a monastery, he asked of the king his master some land for this purpose. When the building was completed Eloi perceived that the architects had taken a foot of land more than Dagobert had granted. He hastened immediately to the palace, threw himself like a guilty man at the king's feet, and asked pardon for his infidelity. Surprised and touched by such noble rectitude, and such extreme tenderness of conscience, the king raised him with kindness and punished him by doubling his first donation. After Eloi had retired: "See," said the king to those who surrounded him, "how faithful and how conscientious are those who serve Jesus Christ; my governors and stewards will unscrupulously possess themselves of entire provinces, whilst Eloi trembles at having one inch of land which belongs to me!"

The most daring theft (of which we have, thank God, no occasion to speak here) is that violent and forcible robbery which is practised only by brigands and highwaymen. These wretched men who scale walls, break open doors and windows, and waylay travellers, only fall into such an excess of crime by forgetfulness of God, and the loss of all religion.

But that which is, alas, far more common, is the secret hidden theft, dexterously committed, and the very guilt of which is often concealed by some specious pretext. And thus, whatever may be said to the contrary, the child *steals* who takes things secretly from his parents. The servant *steals* who, under pretence of insufficient wages, contrives to keep even the smallest amount of change out of the money given him for different purposes, or who gives away bread or wine without the permission of his master.

The workman *steals* who, under pretext that he is not sufficiently paid, manages to pay himself with his own hands, and to deceive his employer in a multiplicity of ways.

The shopman *steals* who sells at a high price goods which he knows to be of an inferior quality; or who *deteriorates* what he sells, wine, for instance, or milk, by mixing it with water to increase the quantity; or has recourse to certain *tricks* which add to the weight of different articles of commerce.

All these different methods of cheating and deceiving are very common in the world, but to be guilty of either is to sin, and sometimes to sin very grievously, according to the *extent* of the wrong that is done, and every one is under obligation to make reparation to their neighbour as far as that is possible. There are many other ways of obtaining unjust possession of the property of others. The cupidity of man is so inventive! To cite a few of these different ways: It is *dishonest* to bring about an unjust trial; to profit by a judicial sentence that you know to be false; to lend money upon usury; to neglect any duty through cowardice or negligence, as workmen or servants do, who only work when their master is watching them; to leave debts unpaid when it is possible to pay them; to withhold from servants or workmen the wages due to them; to cheat at play; to keep anything you might find, without trying to discover its owner; to break a promise; all these common failings are nothing but disguised dishonesty, and those who are addicted to such practices as these will certainly go to hell or to purgatory if they do not repair, as far as in them lies, the wrong they have done to their neighbour.

Those who have stolen must not fail to restore; this is unquestionable. "Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," says the Gospel. Thieves shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. "No restitution," cried the great bishop St. Augustine, "no restitution, no absolution." And in this the law of God is sanctioned by all human laws; in every civilised country thieves are punished and are forced to restore what they have taken, or to repair the mischief they have done.

When it is impossible to make restitution it is at least necessary to repent, and to be sincerely *disposed* to make restitution whenever that is possible.

It is, moreover, necessary to restore the stolen property to the person from whom it was stolen, and not to any other. There are those who believe it is sufficient to give

something of equal value to the poor, but in this they entirely deceive themselves. It is *to Cæsar* that it is necessary to restore that which was taken *from Cæsar*. And mark well that this is without any distinction of riches or property, of honour or dishonour. We have no more right to take a penny from a rich man than from a poor man, for is not the penny of the rich man quite as clearly the property of another as is the penny of the poor man? If to steal from a poor man is a more serious offence than to steal from a rich man, that is only because of the extent of the wrong done, and not because it is allowable to take from the rich, even of their superfluity. Alas! how great has been the evil caused by cupidity. How many souls have been cast into hell by possessions unlawfully obtained! How many have wanted courage to repair the wrong done to their neighbour! How many have wanted courage to acknowledge this sin of dishonesty at the tribunal of penance! And yet it is the tribunal of pardon and of mercy.

Stolen money hardens the heart. Thieves seldom repent. A miserable usurer died without the sacraments some years ago, in Normandy, for the sake of a sum of eight francs which he was not willing to restore! . . . To be eternally lost for the sake of eight francs! Is it possible to understand such madness?

Oh, let us be honest men! It is not everything to be an honest man, but it is much. Let us guard against the desire for money; let us covet something nobler and more worthy of ourselves. "*Blessed,*" said our Divine Master, "*are the poor in spirit*" (namely, those whose hearts are detached from the fleeting prosperity of the world), "*for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*"

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

THE eighth commandment of God forbids many sins which are hurtful to our neighbour as to ourselves—lying, false witness, and calumny. We might fill a whole volume with so important and practical a subject; but a few words are better than none, and those few we will try to make both clear and simple.

To lie is to speak with an intention to deceive; it is to affirm as true what we know to be false, or as false what we

know to be true, with the intention of misleading those to whom we speak. It is evident that lying is a great evil, since God is truth itself.

There are many kinds of lies; the least serious of all is that which is spoken in jest, for amusement, and to entrap some one; in such a case as this, it might be no sin if nothing serious is involved. Officious lies, being more deliberately spoken, are of greater importance; these are lies that are told to render service to others, to prevent any one from being punished, or to obtain some advantage for a friend; however charitable the intention, such lies are distinctly forbidden. No lie is allowable, under any pretext, not even to render service to others.

If you lie to excuse yourself, the cowardice or self-love which prompts you to speak falsely adds also to the gravity of your offence. It is still worse if you lie from a spirit of boasting, or, worse still, to injure another. Under different circumstances a lie may become a grievous sin if it relate to anything of great importance, and is accompanied by circumstances which take away all excuse. A lie may be even a *sacrilege:* for instance, a serious lie told in confession. But whatever may be the gravity of a lie under particular circumstances, it must always be avoided with the greatest care; he who is not faithful in small things will hardly be faithful in greater things.

False witness is a solemn lie which always includes perjury, and which is usually not only a sin but a crime. God, by the mouth of St. Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles points out to us the enormity of this sin in the tragical account of the death of Ananias and Saphira. Ananias and Saphira his wife were Jews, and had become Christians. It was in the time of the apostles, at Jerusalem; and the early Christians, filled with the Holy Spirit, and utterly detached from the things of this world, parted voluntarily with all their possessions and brought the price of them to the apostles, to be distributed amongst the poor.

Ananias and Saphira, being less fervent, yet not wishing to appear less perfect than the rest, brought only a part of their fortune, affirming to the Apostle St. Peter, who solemnly questioned them, that that was all they had. "Why hast thou lied to the Holy Ghost?" said St. Peter, supernaturally enlightened by the Spirit of God. "Why hath Satan tempted thy heart? Couldst thou not keep thy

possession, was it not in thy power? no one obliged you to bring it to us. Thou hast not lied to men, but to God."

And Ananias and Saphira fell, suddenly struck down, and died. If perjurers and false witnesses are not always punished thus immediately, their sin is no less serious, and they will surely feel the effects of God's justice hereafter if they do not quickly repent.

There is yet another way of violating the eighth commandment, and that is by *calumny*.

Calumny consists in wronging our neighbour by imputing to him some evil that he has not committed. If it is anything of serious consequence, calumny is a mortal sin. But it need hardly be said that, for calumny to be a sin there must be an evil intention, and a clear knowledge of the falsehood asserted, otherwise it would be simply error or slander. A calumniator is necessarily a liar who lies with the intention of destroying the character of his neighbour. When we have had the misfortune to commit this sin, and thus to take away any one's reputation, we are bound by conscience to repair, as much as possible, the evil we have done. In this respect, just as with theft, reparation is a rigorous duty, and one of the essential conditions of true repentance and of that pardon which we ask from God. It is necessary to be most scrupulous in speaking of others; there are few conversations in which calumny does not play a principal part, and, whatever palliations may be urged, such conversations are no less sinful and dangerous. He who would be horrified at the thought of stabbing his neighbour with a knife, stabs him pitilessly and remorselessly with his tongue. Let us therefore consider our words. Let us be neither inconsiderate, nor chattering, nor mischief-making. Let us be, on the contrary, guarded in speech, and merciful in judgment. Let us love the truth, and thus show our love to our Lord, who has said of Himself, "I AM THE TRUTH." Let us be straightforward and sincere; when we have been mistaken let us always have the courage to recognise our fault, and, if questioned, to acknowledge our liability to error. He who thus humbles himself shall be exalted both before men and before God. Let us never tell a lie for any consideration whatever, but ever cultivate an especial reverence towards the eighth commandment of God: "Thou *shalt* not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

If the sixth commandment forbids every act that is contrary to purity, the ninth goes still farther, and forbids every thought and desire contrary to this virtue. An evil thought, a sinful desire, are grievous sins when they are entirely voluntary. When they are *not* voluntary, they are not sins, but *temptations.* The devil, who from the time of the fall has exercised over us his disastrous influence, endeavours by every means to shake our will, and to turn it away from the obedience it owes to God.

In order to tempt us he first makes use of our imagination, and, at the moment when we are least prepared, torments us by evil thoughts which he knows how to render seductive. He has also power to present to the mind a terrible imagery by which he hopes to entice the soul into his snares. Fable relates how ancient navigators sometimes encountered in the midst of the seas strange beings called *sirens,* half women and half serpents, whose beautiful faces, and exquisite voices, so charmed those who were imprudent enough to wait and listen to them, that the unfortunate men, fascinated and bewildered, allowed themselves to fall into the water, where the sirens devoured them.

Satan makes fact of this old fable every day by tempting and destroying many victims. He casts a perfidious and alluring disguise over the evil he desires us to commit. Do not listen to him; he is a traitor. He lies, and he deceives us. Happiness is not, *cannot* be, obtained by the means that he points out. It is death, and not life, that he offers us.

The greatest saints, as well as we, have had their fierce temptations. They have repulsed them with invincible energy, and their holiness has been augmented in the combat. St. Francis of Sales, the great and admirable bishop of Geneva, who died without ever having committed a mortal sin, acknowledged to one of his intimate friends that chastity and meekness had been the Christian virtues which had demanded from him the greatest vigilance. St. Catherine of Sienna, who was an angel of holiness and innocence, who passed a part of her life in ecstasy, was once so rudely attacked by the devil, that for two months she

had no respite; after this frightful temptation which she had courageously resisted, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared visibly before her, and as St. Catherine, prostrating herself at His feet, thanked Him humbly for her deliverance, and said to Him, "O my Saviour, where wast Thou during all this tempest?" Jesus answered her with tenderness, "My daughter, I was in thy heart, and thou hast never been nearer to Me."

If the saints have been tempted thus, it is not strange that we should be tempted too. Let us imitate their firmness, and when Satan knocks at the door of our heart, we must be careful never to open it to him; we should not even be too much disturbed by the noise he makes at the door. We must say to him clearly and without hesitation, *Vade retro Satana:* "I know thee, and thou shalt not deceive me. I belong to God, in this world, and for ever." One of the best means of weakening temptations is to utterly despise them. It is better to pay no attention to them, but as soon as you are conscious of them, to try to distract the mind by some occupation, and by turning the thoughts to some entirely different subject. If the attack continue, let us then pray, employ the best means in our power, and leave recourse to the Blessed Virgin, the queen of angels, and the special protectress of purity. Let us make with reverence the sign of the Cross, so dreaded by the devil, and most carefully avoid everything that could awake or develop the temptation. But I repeat that there is no sin in thoughts which are not voluntary, that is to say, provoked or freely accepted by the will; let us then keep our hearts and minds innocent and pure even when assailed by fierce temptation. In whatever state we may be, let us guard the treasure of Christian chastity. Let young men follow the holy example of St. Louis of Gonzaque, of St. Stanislaus of Kostka, and of so many other pure and virtuous young men. Let young girls walk in the steps of that innumerable crowd of Christian virgins who, under the protection of the virgin of Virgins Mary the immaculate mother of God, form, both on earth and in heaven, the long retinue of the Lamb without spot.

Let husbands and wives always remember the sanctity of marriage, mutually respect each other, and, in imitation of Sara and young Tobias, sanctify their love by the holy love

of God; and let them by constant prayer call down the blessing of God upon their union.

How great and important a reformation would be effected in society; how far greater would be the peace and happiness of many homes, if this commandment were but faithfully observed!

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT OF GOD.

THERE are many kinds of evil desires. After having declared by the ninth commandment that all unlawful desires of the flesh are guilty and forbidden, God gives us a tenth and last commandment to proscribe all unlawful desires for the property of others.

I say "*unlawful desires*," since it is not the *desire* for our neighbour's possessions that is forbidden, but simply the *unjust desire;* it is no sin to wish for something that belongs to another, but only to do so in an unlawful manner. For instance, it is not in the least forbidden that I, a poor workman, or the poor mother of a family, should desire comforts like those which my neighbour enjoys, who is even able to bring up her little family with ease. But I *am* forbidden to desire the possession of this fortune by unjust or injurious means. When I see my comrade wearing a good coat, very thick and quite new, whilst I, poor fellow, have nothing on my back but a threadbare waistcoat, or a ragged shirt, I may, in all conscience, give a heavy sigh, and say to myself, "When shall *I* be dressed as warmly and as comfortably as that?" When I see a grand carriage pass, is it not quite lawful and natural that I should cast a piteous glance upon the old umbrella and the worn-out shoes which are my sole protection from the rain and the mud.

Such desires as these are not in themselves unjust or guilty; but they are always useless and may easily become dangerous. Am I any the richer for having *wished* I were not poor? Have I a good coat upon by back because I have sighed to possess one? All these desires will bring fortune to no one, and the truly wise man should abstain from them, because, far from rendering him happier, they do but embitter those privations from which he already suffers.

Still more, these desires may become dangerous, and even guilty. If we think much of our neighbour's goods, desiring to possess them honestly, we may unconsciously go farther and desire to possess by some unlawful means, even by cheating or by violence. These evil sentiments of envy and jealousy are nothing less than a direct violation of the tenth commandment; and it is to these that I desire to call your attention.

There is in our nature an instinctive leaning towards pleasure and enjoyment, and when we suffer privation, we are only too ready to feel irritated and indignant at the prosperity of others. Hence arise hatred and antipathy, and often even criminal actions; many thefts and assassinations have originated solely in this subtile sentiment of envy, in this despicable jealousy which leads us to cast covetous glances on our neighbour's goods, upon his coat and his field, his horses and his house.

And hence arises *Socialism*, which is essentially a doctrine of envy and rage, a programme of the unjust anger of him who has nothing against him who has much, or rather, of him who has less against him who has more.

It is difficult to say how fatal this passion proves to those who are once overcome by it. To begin with, it renders them miserable because it causes them to suffer, not from their own troubles alone, but from the good fortune of their neighbours, their friends, and their relations. And next, it constantly paralyses and unfits them for work, by bringing ever before them the thought of riches which they will never obtain, and by making them averse to everything which is opposed to that smooth and prosperous life which is the object of their envy.

How much happier men would be, how great the social improvement, even from a worldly point of view, if all would listen to the peaceful, beneficent voice of religion! Faith permits them, we have said, to desire a happier existence; she even makes a duty of work and of honest endeavour, without which it were impossible for the workman to rise from the depths of poverty to a life of comparative comfort and ease; but more than all, she consoles them in the midst of their troubles, and, penetrating to the depths of the heart, plants there the seeds of hope and joy. Religion repeats to them those sweet words which fell long ago from the sacred lips of her Divine Founder: "Come to Me,

all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light." She points them to heaven, to an eternal joy, an unmingled happiness, a perfect repose.

Behold what awaits you if you are faithful during your probation, and if, following the example of your Master, you bear your cross with patience day by day!

Set your supreme affections on the things above, and not on the things of earth; and if sometimes the prosperity of others excite you to desire what, in your case, God has been pleased to withhold, let these desires never be unjust; let them never infringe upon the tenth and last of the Divine commandments.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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